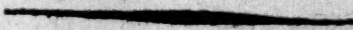


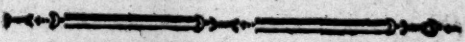
MEDITATIONS

AND

DISCOURSES, &c.



VOL. I



MEDITATIONS

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DISCOURSES



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AND
DISCOURSES
ON THE
SUBLIME TRUTHS
AND
IMPORTANT DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

—
BEING A POSTHUMOUS WORK
OF THE

Rev. Alban Butler,

K

Vicar-General of the Diocese of Arras, St. Omer, Boulogne and Amiens,
Vice-President and Professor of Divinity in the English College at Douay,
and President of the English College at St. Omer, &c, &c.

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VOLUME I.
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L O N D O N:
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MEDITATIONS

AND

DISCOURSES

ON THE

SUBJECTS

OF

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY A. A. A. A. A.



WOLFE



LONDON

TO THE
RIGHT HONORABLE
HENRY, LORD ARUNDELL,

Count of the Sacred Roman Empire,

THE POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

Rev. Alban Butler,

WHOM, WHEN LIVING, HIS LORDSHIP HONORED
WITH HIS REGARD, AND TO EVERY PART
OF WHOSE FAMILY HIS LORDSHIP HAS BEEN
A BENEFACTOR,

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBLIGED

AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,

July 15, 1791.

CHARLES BUTLER, THE EDITOR.

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СЛЕДОВАТЕЛЯ

HENRY, LORD ARUNDELL



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1941-1942

C O N T E N T S

OF VOLUME THE FIRST.

OF THE

REV. ALBAN BUTLER'S DISCOURSES.

Meditation I.	<i>Salvation our only affair</i>	Page 1
II.	<i>Salvation our only affair of importance</i>	6
III.	<i>On fervour in the service of God</i>	11
IV.	<i>On tepidity in the service of God</i>	17
V.	<i>On the violation of the precept of tending to perfection by tepidity,—that perfection is commanded and given to all</i>	25
VI.	<i>On the manner of performing well our ordinary actions against tepidity</i>	32
VII.	<i>On the delay of repentance</i>	40
VIII.	<i>On death-bed repentance</i>	48
IX.	<i>On human respect</i>	56
X.	<i>On venial sin</i>	70
XI.	<i>On venial sins of surprize</i>	83
XII.	<i>On habitual sin</i>	91
XIII.	<i>On the sin of relapse</i>	102
XIV.	<i>Repentance in inconstant relapsing sinners usually false</i>	112
Discourse XV.	<i>On penance, 1. The virtue</i>	121
	<i>2. Interior</i>	139
	<i>Various methods of forming acts of contrition</i>	154
	<i>On the penitential psalms in general, and on the 50, and 129 in particular</i>	167
		and 180
	<i>A purpose of satisfaction for sin by a penitential life, in the form of an appeal from the tribunal of God's justice to that of his mercy, from Gerson</i>	182
		Two

<i>Two short acts of contrition for a soul already sufficiently moved to com- punction —</i>		page 184
Disc. XVI. <i>On exterior works of penance or satisfaction</i>		185
<i>The sacrament of penance</i>		206
XVII. <i>On the advantages of the sacrament of penance</i>		218
XVIII Chap. 1. <i>On the virtue of religion</i>		229
Chap. 2. <i>On faith</i>		238
Chap. 3. <i>On the qualities of faith, and on the catechism</i>		252
Chap. 4. <i>On the Creed</i>		265
XIX. <i>On Matrimony</i>		269
XX. <i>On hope</i>		282
XXI. <i>On despair, presumption, and tempting God, and on the virtue of holy fear</i>		296
XXII. <i>On charity or divine love</i>		308
XXIII. <i>On the means to obtain and improve di- vine charity in our souls, and on the acts of this virtue</i>		322
XXIV. <i>On the dangers of the world</i>		331
XXV. <i>On the contempt of the world</i>		344
XXVI. <i>On mortification</i>		354

α NO 63

MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATION I.

SALVATION OUR ONLY AFFAIR.

1. **O**UR Salvation is the only end for which Almighty God created us, and placed us in this world.
2. It was his only end in redeeming us.
3. It is the only thing he has given us in charge, and this by the most severe command.

First Point,

One thing is necessary, says our dearest Saviour; viz. that we love and serve God, and save our souls. This was the sole and whole design of the most holy Trinity in creating me and all mankind. Nor could he produce any thing but for himself, as it is the indefeasible right of the Creator that every creature always depend on, and ever be referred to him, its essential last end and centre. He stood in no need of any creature, being infinitely happy in himself, and incapable of receiving any addition or accession. Thou art my God, because thou standest not in need of my goods. It was out of his mere boundless goodness that he was pleased to create men, that he might communicate

B

himself

himself to them, and make them happy in himself. Thus he made them for himself. *The Lord wrought all things for himself.* I lay buried in the abyfs of my nothing: If God stretched out his merciful arm and drew me thence; if he gave me this noble Being capable of knowing and praising him; if he bestowed on me this Body with all its wonderful organs and senses; this immortal soul indued with reason and all its faculties: it was only that I might know and love him, and be made partaker of his happiness and goodness. He framed the sun, moon and other planets; the vast firmament spangled with so many bright stars, and the heavens with all the bodies they contain, and established the laws of their uninterrupted revolutions and various movements, for me. He created for me this earth with all its elements, metals, fruits, trees and plants; and with all the innumerable variety of living creatures that fill the air, the earth and the waters: all for this same only end, that I might thank, praise and obey him. It was no part of his adorable design in making and placing me here, that I should occupy myself in pleasures, riches, honours, or any other thing whatsoever which should not totally and purely belong and be referred to this his only end. Every moment therefore I ever spent in such empty pursuits, I run counter to the holy designs of the blessed Trinity in my regard, and to the sole end for which I received my being in this world. With what regret, my God, do I reflect on my past unthinking folly and base perfidiousness! No more, by thy assistance, will I ever be so senseless. I will never undertake or perform any action even in my temporal affairs, but in the view of doing your most holy will. To this alone I will labour with all my strength, I will refer all my moments; I will consecrate my thoughts, affections, words and actions. For this I will never cease most earnestly to implore your divine grace. Teach me and strengthen me to seek and follow

follow only your holy will in all things, and never more to swerve from my end fixed by yourself. *Make my end known to me.* Notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum; Ps. xxxviii. shall be my continual prayer.

In this same only view has God preserved and still preserves me, thus every moment bestowing afresh my whole Being upon me, rescuing and protecting me from innumerable accidents, misfortunes and dangers, furnishing me with all the conveniences, necessities and comforts of life which I enjoy. How could I be so blind and insensible as hitherto so strangely to misapply his gifts, and abuse his bounty to my own inexpressible misfortune. I will, to the utmost of my power, for the future, retrieve and make all possible amends for past losses, by giving every action and moment to my last end with redoubled fervour.

Second Point.

God points out this my only end, still more remarkably, in all the great mysteries he has wrought for me, *in the order of grace*:—In these he displays his infinite wisdom and power in the most astonishing manner. When I was lost in sin, and groaned under the slavery of the Devil and the sentence of eternal damnation, the blessed Trinity decreed my redemption, and the eternal God the Son descended from Heaven, cloathed himself with human nature, led a painful laborious life on earth, and died a most cruel and ignominious death, to pay my ransom, and re-instate me in grace, only that I might love and serve him. All the mysteries of his whole life, his birth, his hidden life, his miracles, preaching, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension; his establishing his Church; his sacraments, and inspirations, the exhortations of his ministers; all the graces, all the means of salvation I have ever received, had only this one end in view; that I should save my soul. If ever I deviate from it, I frustrate in my regard, all his designs, all his sufferings and labours,

labours, and all his graces which cost him so dear. My soul, thy salvation is a good for which God has not spared his only Son: a good which this only Son has purchased at the price of his own blood, of his life, of himself. See how much thou hast cost a God, and hence frame an idea of the importance of this affair of thy salvation. Can any Christian be so senseless as to give up his right to God's inheritance for a base pleasure, for a vile interest?

Third Point.

God in creating me has commanded me to serve him and save my soul, and that I make this my only affair. *It is written; thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and serve him alone.* Mat. iv. 10. *No man can serve two masters.* Mat. vi. 20. And the Oracle of the Holy Ghost declares: *Fear God and keep his commandments: for in this does every man, and the whole man consist.* Eccles. xii. 13. i. e. all else in man is nothing. All honours, riches, shining qualities, great actions, conquests of empires: all wit, policy, knowledge and sciences are nothing; nothing in themselves, and in reality; mere folly before God and in truth. It is only as far as his service may be found in them, that they are to be considered. The humble labour of the poorest artisan, referred to God, is incomparably great; whereas they are emptiness, and generally sin. *Though a man should be accomplished and quite finished among the sons of men, if thy wisdom be not with him, he will be reckoned for nothing, O God.* Sap. ix. 6. Though he should be the most accomplished in all natural parts, and in all acquired qualifications of mind and body; the most learned philosopher and an oracle in all sciences; the most renowned Conqueror, who fills the universe with the noise of his name, all this, the Holy Ghost says, is contemptible, is nothing. The valour of an Alexander and a Cesar, the eloquence of a Cicero, the learning of an Aristotle or a Plato is nothing. The poverty of a Lazarus,
abandoned

abandoned by all the world, is far more desirable than all the greatness, all the riches and all the delights of the earth: a glass of cold water given to a poor man is preferable to the acquisition of a crown, and one simple act of the meanest virtue is preferable to the most famous exploits of those Divinities of the earth who have filled the world with the sound of their applause. Splendid as these are in the eyes of mortals, God esteems more than them all, one single thought of the most simple labourer employed for eternity. Did men weigh well this truth, they would envy the solitude of the poorest artisan above the highest throne on earth, and deem all the world esteems (as it truly is) folly and madness.

My soul, examine thy own heart. Has the service of God been hitherto thy only end? Make it such for the future. Hast thou looked upon this as thy only affair? esteem it so from henceforward. Have this deeply engraven on thy mind: let all other projects succeed or not succeed, it matters not. *Whatever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted for nothing.* Imit. Chr. B. 3. c. 31. All my actions and my whole life ought to be directed to this end.

To serve him and save my soul shall be my only and continued study, my only affair. It was the only end in the designs of God the Father in creating me. Behold the first lesson I learned in my Catechism. It was the only end in the designs of God the Son in redeeming me; the only end of his mysteries, labours and death. It was *for us men and for our salvation*, says the Nicene Creed. It is the only end of the Holy Ghost in sanctifying me; and in all the graces he has bestowed and is ready to bestow upon me. And shall not this be my only study and aim in all things? I belong to God in *justice*, as I am all his: I belong to him in *gratitude*, as I subsist entirely by his benefits: I belong all to him, as he is *my last end*: I belong to him *for my own*

own interest, and as he is my happiness; I am made for him, and he alone is capable of filling my heart. I will then live and die to him alone, and to his service.

M E D I T A T I O N II.

SALVATION OUR ONLY AFFAIR OF IMPORTANCE.

WE judge of the importance of an affair; 1st, by its excellence, and by the consequence it is of: 2dly, By the difficulty of retrieving it in case of a miscarriage: 3dly, By the dangers and difficulties which attend it. These considerations alone suffice to shew salvation is man's only affair of importance.

First Point.

The more noble, the more excellent a thing is, the greater is its importance. To obtain a rich empire, or any place of great honour, what pains do not worldlings take? because they think it an affair of the utmost importance, especially if a miscarriage in it should threaten them with utter ruin. A law-suit on which a great estate, and their all, depends, what application, what study, what anxiety does it not bring? How does it engross all a man's thoughts and fill his mind so that he is not able to give any attention to any other thing whatsoever? The importance of this draws him totally to itself, and drowns all thoughts about other things. If I have seen a man engaged in such a suit, or standing a dangerous trial for his life, I understood what it was for one to have an affair of weight on his mind. Such and greater ought to be my attention to the affair

affair of my salvation. It ought wholly to possess
 my soul, and fill my mind and heart, so as to swal-
 low up and drown all temporal concerns whatso-
 ever. This will make me sovereignly happy or
 sovereignly miserable; and that for eternity.
 No other affair can make me altogether happy
 or miserable; all other losses leave some com-
 fort or enjoyment, but this none at all; this in-
 cludes all losses possible. O consider seriously, my
 soul, what it is to be saved or damned; to live for
 ever with the saints or suffer for ever with the de-
 vils, to reign in heaven or suffer in hell. Weigh
 well these great truths, and you will see this affair
 is infinitely greater than all the worldly business of
 kings and emperors, and all men put together; that
 it is our only affair; that providing this be safe, all
 is well: all sufferings, all other losses possible are
 not to be in the least regarded. But if this miscarry,
 all is lost. The infinite importance of this affair
 quite swallows up all other concerns. *For what
 doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and
 suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall
 a man give for his soul?* Mat. xvi. 26. If this be
 lost, every thing is lost, says S. Eucherius, *Ubi salu-
 tis damnum, ibi nullum lucrum.* Euch. ep. ad Valer.
 Yet men little think on this. God looked down from
 heaven, says the Royal Prophet, to see if there is a
 man of understanding and seeking God on earth. All
 have gone astray; are altogether become unprofitable;
 there is not one who does good. Ps. xiii. and lii.
 Could a man from some point in the heavens behold
 the whole world at once, and what all men are em-
 ployed in; and did God discover to him all that
 passes now in their souls, he would, doubtless, see a
 wonderful multitude and variety of thoughts and
 desires; but all tending to the perishable goods of
 this life, scarce any looking farther and referring
 them to eternity. He would see some eagerly pur-
 suing honours and empire, others, riches; others,
 taken up with pastimes and pleasures: many, in
 building,

building, trading, tilling the ground, &c. All transported with passion, anger, hatred, jealousy, love or the like, and filled with an infinity of opposite thoughts and desires; but scarce one thinking seriously on eternity. All like little children busied earnestly about bawbles, but insensible to the greatest losses or concerns: infinitely deplorable, that *their* employments lead to torments, whereas childrens play-things are toys of their age. Want of knowledge excuses a child if he rejoices to have a suit of mourning at the death of a parent, insensible of his loss: but men are inexcusable, in being so insensible in regard to eternity. The Holy Ghost cries out to them. *Usquequó parvuli diligitis infantiam?* How long, O children, do you delight in toys? Hear, Kings and Lords, Doctors, Prelates, Generals, Soldiers, Merchants and Labourers,—and all ye who busied with the cares of this life neglect eternity,—you are all deemed fools by the judgment of eternal wisdom, and your folly is the most extreme madness. My soul, beware of such blindness. Make thy salvation thy only concern in all thy undertakings. The Romans engraved in brass this as the supreme law of their Republic, to take place of all other laws: *Salus populi suprema lex esto.* Let the safety of the people be the sovereign law. Engrave on thy heart and on all thy actions this as thy supreme rule, to be always and solely attended to: *The salvation of thy soul is thy sovereign law.* For other affairs regard only particular times or circumstances; this is the great affair of all times, actions and places, at home and abroad, in town and in country, in solitude and in company, in church, at court or the market.

Second Point.

Our salvation is of greater importance because a miscarriage in it is for ever, and utterly irretrievable. Temporal losses usually may, at least in some

some measure, be repaired, or some amends, some comfort still remains. If we lose an house we may build another; if a friend, we may find a second: if we lose an eye or an hand, we have one still; at least we have always some comforts or helps to supply the loss. But we have but one soul, and if this be once lost, the loss is absolute, and eternally irretrievable; for out of hell there is no redemption. If in case of a miscarriage, we could be admitted to a second chance, the case would not be absolutely so dreadful. But a soul once lost is for ever lost. Can I then risque this my only one, this my great all, my spiritual and immortal soul, created to the likeness of God and stamped with his image! She was made only to know, love and enjoy God, and to be his eternal spouse.

Ah, my soul! secure thy main chance, in which a loss is absolutely irrecoverable and entire. Contemn all other affairs whatsoever; only be solicitous never to expose this to the least hazard. No care, no security can be too great where an eternity is depending. Bear always in mind the important advice of thy Redeemer, the true lover of souls: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice.* Matt. vi. 33. And the comment of St. Bernard, *Never admit the least thought prejudicial to thy salvation. I say too little: I mean the least thought which does not concern or some way tend to thy salvation: if any such occur, it is to be rejected.* De Conf. l. 3. c. 3.

Third Point.

What above other considerations ought to excite my solicitude and watchfulness, is the difficulty and uncertainty of this most important affair, and my all. No where absolute security on earth: the way is straight, the Judge rigorous, the examen most strict and severe, on every action, intention and thought. I am weakness itself; my understanding clouded; my will perverted by sin; my

passions strong and many: enemies without and within, numerous, subtle, and implacable. Amidst these, my soul is surrounded with so many dangers that my salvation must imply a chain of many continued miracles. Imagine a small boat, half rotten, leaking on every side, floating on a vast sea full of rocks and shelves, beaten by a furious storm, in the midst of a dark night, and pursued by cruel pirates; what a miracle or rather chain of miracles would be necessary for that poor vessel to arrive safe in the harbour? The state of a soul in this world is still more dangerous, meeting every where dangers, every where stumbling blocks. Nor can she ever have any security; for, as the wise-man says, *Who of men can know his own way?* Prov. xx. 24. We see an Apostle, though confirmed in grace, chastising his body lest he should become a reprobate; a St. John the Baptist, though sanctified in his mother's womb, pass twenty-five years in a frightful solitude, and in the most severe penitential life; a S. Augustin, after his conversion, refusing to teach rhetoric or profane learning, lest he should forget his salvation; others burnt, racked, or hewn in pieces; legions of saints retiring into loanesome deserts, others walling themselves up in cloisters, all labouring with continual application to secure their salvation; and can I be so slothful and negligent in this my great, my only concern, and yet live secure, as if salvation cost little, and was the last, the safest of affairs.

If I will, it is certainly in my power to save my soul, and secure my eternity, through the assistance of divine grace. God wills not the death of any sinner; *he desires all men to be saved.* 2 Tim. ii. 4. He created me only to serve him and to save myself. He sent his only Son, equal and co-eternal with himself, to redeem me. After giving me, *Him*, has not he given all other things with him! He furnishes me abundantly all the means of salvation, and assures me of all his most powerful succours,

cours, infinitely more earnestly desiring my happiness, than I can do myself. I will then strive and contend with the greatest ardour I am capable of to ascertain this main and only affair.

M E D I T A T I O N III.

ON FERVOUR IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

THE first great obstacle by which the Devil ruins the salvation of innumerable christian souls, is lukewarmness and tepidity. For fervour is necessary to begin to serve God truly. 1. It is necessary to persevere in serving him. 2. It behoves me to know in what this christian fervour consists.

First Point.

The first step to virtue is vehemently to desire it. To desire so great a good only by halves is to undervalue it, and the sure disposition never to obtain it. Our Saviour compares the kingdom of God to a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field; and again, to a pearl of great price, which when one had found, he went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46. This great treasure, this precious pearl is the kingdom of God reigning in our souls by his grace. This is a good above all price; God is mercifully pleased to bestow it upon us, but on condition we give for it our whole selves. If we do not offer him our souls and all our affections, without any reserve or division, we cannot purchase it. It is a false maxim of the world that the kingdom of God costs

little: it must cost all we have: it requires an entire sacrifice of all, at least, in spirit. Religious persons who consecrate themselves to God in cloisters, renounce the world and all its affairs, distractions, vanities and pleasures; the dominion of themselves and their own wills. This is not of precept to all: this they do only as a means to be able to make the interior sacrifice of all in their hearts more freely and more perfectly. But this inward sacrifice of all things in spirit is indispensably necessary, and of precept in all, whether Religious, or Christians in the world. It is only on this condition, only by this means I can purchase the kingdom of God by his grace in my soul in this life, and that of his glory in the world to come.

My heart cannot contain together God and the world: it is too narrow for both. God is too great to allow any rival, or to find a place in a divided heart. His first and great law is: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole mind.* Matt. xxii. 37. He has made me all for himself, and cannot without the greatest injury, indignity and injustice to himself, admit any partner or competitor in my affections. *No man can serve two masters;* Matt. v. especially such as are mutually contrary to one another, as God and the world essentially are. We must then seek this inestimable treasure of grace with the most earnest desire we are capable of, — with a desire that has some proportion to so great a blessing; with a desire ready to renounce and sacrifice every thing else for it; with a desire that despises and tramples upon all things which tend not to this. With the Apostle—we must count all things to be but loss—I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ. Phil. iii. 8. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice;* (i. e. that seek it with a vehement desire): *for they shall have their fill,* says our blessed Saviour, Matt. v. 6. And the Wise-man: *The beginning of wisdom is the most*
rue

true desire of discipline. Sap. vi. 18. And he attributes to this all the spiritual wisdom of grace and virtue which God bestowed upon him. I desired, and wisdom was given me: and I begged it, and the spirit of wisdom came unto me. And I preferred it to kingdoms and thrones; and I counted riches to be nothing in comparison of it. Nor did I compare the precious stones to it, because all gold is but a little sand, and silver will be esteemed as dirt, if compared to it. I loved it above life and beauty, and desired to have it as my light: for its light is perpetual. All good things came unto me together with it, and unspeakable glory through its hands.—Its treasure is infinite to men: they who have used it, have been made sharers of the friendship of God. Sap. vii. 7, &c. He again declares: Wisdom is easily seen by those who love it, and is found by those who seek it. It prevents those who desire her, to shew herself first to them.—He that watches to her from the early morning, shall not labour in his search: for he shall find her at his door. He who shall watch for her, shall be soon secure. Because she goes about seeking those that are worthy of her, and she chearfully shews herself to them in the high-ways, and meets them in every thing. Sap. vi. 13, &c. I loved and sought her from my youth, and sought to take her a spouse to myself, and I was her lover. I purposed to draw her to me to rest with me, knowing that she will communicate of her good things with me. Sap. viii. The devout Henry Suso, hearing these last words read at table, in a Dominicans Convent, was so powerfully affected by them, that in public he burst out into these exclamations: Oh! I will try to procure this happy wisdom. If I can obtain it, I am certainly the happiest of men. I will desire, I will seek, I will ask nothing else. It invites me: it is in my power to obtain it. Adieu all other thoughts and employs. I will pray and conjure it without ceasing, and with all the ardour of my soul, to visit me. I will sigh and seek it night and day.

day. Thus he did, and thus he became an eminent servant of God. *Suerius vit. de Suson.*

My soul, the eternal wisdom invites thee, crying aloud on the mountains and high-ways, in the streets, at the entries of towns, at the doors of houses, every where calling men to him, saying: O men, to you I cry out: my voice is directed to the Sons of men. O little ones, learn prudence; and O fools, understand. Listen, for I am going to speak of great things.—Wisdom is better than all most precious things, and no other desirable good can be compared to it. I love those who love me: and they who watch to me in the morning, shall find me. With me are riches and glory; great treasure and justice. My fruit is better than gold and jewels. I walk in the paths of justice; seeking to enrich those who love me, and to fill their stores, &c. Prov. viii. Call in this great good to thyself, and prepare thy heart for it with all possible application and care. Bless God who has created thee for such an infinite blessing, and exert all thy ardour and strength that sloth and cowardice deprive thee not of it. *It is only the hungry God has filled with good things, Luc. i. 53. i. e. those who vehemently desire and most ardently seek them.*

Fervour is equally necessary for us to our perseverance and progress in the service of God. This is the greatest mark of the Holy Ghost's reigning in a soul, if she earnestly strives to advance in perfection. It is a sign a man has already found the mine, when he is earnest to dig farther and farther. *No one is virtuous, says S. Bernard, ep. 254, ad Garin, who does not perpetually strive and desire to be more virtuous. He gives a proof of greater perfection, by how much the more earnestly he labours to attain higher. And as the same Saint says, Serm. 2. de 1 Andr. There is no more certain testimony of the presence of the Holy Ghost than a great desire of higher grace.*

Out

Out of this motive S. Paul trembling always laboured in fear, if by any means he could obtain his crown. "*Si quomodo comprehendam.*" Phil. iii. 13. This is the severe command of God. *Be faithful unto death.* Apoc. xi. 10. Fear not advancing in justice untill death. *Let him who is just, be justified yet: and he who is holy, be sanctified yet more.* This is the law of our engagements to God. This is also the proper effect of grace, which is sure to abandon those who do not improve it. Hence S. Augustin says, *If thou standest still, thou art a lost man.* "*Si stetisti, periisti.*" Serm. 15. verb. ap. And again; *God hates him who would stand still, and who falls back.* l. de Cant. novo, c. 1. Not to go on is to go back. *No man putting his hand to the plough and looking behind him is fit for the kingdom of God,* says Christ, Luke xix. 11. Whence S. Bernard cries out: *O Monk, will thou not go forward? then thou wouldst go back, or thou wouldst stand,—which cannot be; for nothing can stand in the same state in this world.* ep. 353. And S. Gregory the great! *It is not possible to stand in one place: he falls to the lowest, who strives not continually to the highest.* Pastor, p. 3 admon. 53. For on one side, grace forsakes him: on the other, his passions draw him headlong. For we are like to a man, says Cassian, who is rowing against a rapid stream. The moment he ceases to row, he is driven back by the strength of the current. So are we by the torrent of our passions, if we the least let fall our hands.

Second Point.

S. Basil thus defines a fervent soul. *He is fervent in spirit, whoever does the will of God with an ardent desire, an insatiable eagerness, and an unwearied attention and diligence.* Resp. brev. 259. He is one who burning with the holy fire of divine love does not go, but flies to all that regards the service of God, and this with an ardour, zeal and fidelity which

which never slackens; one who penetrated in the bottom of his soul with the most profound sentiments which a creature can conceive for its God, is always occupied in adoring, praising and blessing him, and finds no other pleasure on earth than in all things to do his will and give himself anew to him, and who is insatiable of crosses and sufferings for his sake. Fervour consists not so much in what is done, as in doing every thing in the greatest sentiments for God, *with a great heart and willing cheerful soul.* Farthings offered to God with a heart full of affection are more agreeable to him than the richest presents made with a tepid heart. Fervour then implies, 1st, A sincere intention and an ardent desire to please God. 2dly, An entire application with all possible attention to every duty. 3dly, An extreme gratitude in all duties. 4thly, Courage and joy under all difficulties, breaking through all obstacles. 5thly, To enter into the spirit and perfect sentiments of every virtue. 6thly, To seize all occasions and opportunities of virtue. 7thly, Constancy and perseverance to the end. What eagerness in those that are near Kings? With what zeal do the angels fly to do God's will? With what swiftness do the stars move to perform it? With what exactness does nature observe his laws? An image of the swiftness and exactitude with which we ought to run in all the ways of the Lord.

My soul, convert thyself to God with fervour. *If thou beginnest. begin perfectly,* as *S. Bernard* says. It would be a deceitful stratagem of the Devil, to undertake too much at first. A child cannot bear what a man could. Begin with prudence and advice, but with great ardour and fervency of soul, and with great dispositions. Be careful always to preserve and increase this first fervour of thy conversion; continually to awaken and stir it up afresh. Remind thyself often of thy end and obligations, imitating *S. Bernard*, who often said to himself for this purpose: *Bernard, Bernard, why comest thou hither?*

hither? or *S. Arsenius*, who always repeated: *Arsenius, why didst thou forsake the world, and come into this desert?* 2dly, Say often to thyself, that thou wilt now begin to do penance and serve God, *I have said, it is now I begin in earnest.* Ps. lxxvi. 7. For in the paths of virtue, when a man shall have finished, it is then he still begins. Eccl. xvii. 6. 3dly, Sometimes say, *A great way still remains for thee.* 3 Kings, xix. 7. An eternity is to be provided for; the time for this is very short and uncertain. 4thly, With St. Paul, forget the past, wholly occupied with the thoughts of what is before thee, and how to employ all that well. *I do not think I have as yet attained any thing,* says that apostle, *Phil. iii. 13. but one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.* Thus look only forwards, my soul. But 5thly, remember, thou art to redouble thy pace, because thou hast already lost much time, and the end of thy course draws near: and so much the more, as you shall see the day of the Lord approach nigher you. Heb. x. 25. I must trade till he comes with my wages in his hands. "*Negotiamine dum venio.*" Luke xix. 13.

MEDITATION IV.

ON TEPIDITY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

WHAT this tepidity is. 1. It generally is a state of hidden mortal sin. 2. It exposes to a certain and most dangerous fall.

First Point,

The just fall into venial sins by surprize, and into small infidelities of frailty, but they soon discover

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and detest them, and speedily, by penance for them, recover whatever prejudice or diminution their fervour and charity may have suffered. But those are called lukewarm who wilfully fall into venial sins, and habitually contemn them, or at least who are afraid of embracing a perfect virtue. They frequent the sacraments; they pray; but all with indifference. They indeed are afraid of mortal sin, and would not knowingly consent to one for the world, and propose by their lives to save their souls, and to avoid the broad way: but then they are afraid also of being bigots; or of going too far in piety; they dare not open their hearts entirely to it, and fear it should get quite in possession of their souls. Their common language is, an ordinary virtue is enough for them; they are content if they can be saved with the lowest; or even through purgatory; and do not aim at the merits of the saints, or to walk in the sublime paths of perfection, as they call them. Under these prettexts, they are afraid to go beyond obligation and examine always how far it may be stretched. Thus they bargain as it were with God in every duty, how far they are obliged to go under the guilt of mortal sin. Now this disposition is extremely displeasing to Almighty God. Did he in redeeming them, and in the innumerable mercies which he so bountifully showers down upon them, follow such a rule or go no farther than he was obliged? How must he resent such a base and ungrateful return. *Gerson* illustrates the case by this comparison. If a nobleman amongst many sons had one, who would obstinately sit always idle at home, caring for nothing provided he could live in a sordid manner, saying he was content to lead any kind of mean life, and so would never undertake or learn any thing suitable to his birth or capacity, though continually admonished and pressed to it by his father: Is it not evident such a disobedient slothful son could expect no favours

vours from his father? *Myſt. theol. confid. T. 3. c. 405.* Another common comparifon is, of a ſervant, who though unwilling to tranſgreſs his maſter's orders in matters of weight, ſhould be ever diſputing how far his duty carried him in them, and ſhould make it even his diverſion to violate his commands in ſmaller things on every occaſion. Certainly ſuch a behaviour would be more inſupportable, than that of a ſervant who ſhould ſometimes offend in points of moment. Thus the lukewarm Chriſtian is often more odious to God than the open ſinner. Hear what our Saviour ſaid to the lukewarm, Biſhop of Laodicea. *Apoc. iii. 15, 16. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot; but becauſe thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* Had he been quite cold in the ſervice of God, Chriſt would not have ſo much abhorred him. As he was lukewarm, our merciful Lord expreſſes how hateful that ſtate was to him, by ſaying his ſtomach even loathed him, and that he muſt vomit him up, and caſt him off.

Second Point.

Lukewarmneſs in any conſiderable degree muſt generally be accompanied with many hidden mortal ſins. The ſoul flatters herſelf ſhe is in a ſtate of grace, but alas! before God ſhe has already loſt that happineſs, and yet her miſery is hidden from her eyes. Firſt, Perhaps ſhe has been in an habitual diſpoſition of never labouring to avoid any venial ſin. This is in itſelf always a mortal ſin, becauſe it implies a grievous contempt of God, and is an immediate occaſion of mortal ſin. 2dly, The tepid ſoul is ever ſtudying to enlarge the narrow way as much as may be, and often ventures to the bounds of mortal ſin, bounds which are often uncertain, and in which ſelf-love eaſily blinds and de-

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ceives the negligent Christian. Thus whilst he allows himself several liberties and freedoms in his actions, in his words, in his thoughts, he often offends mortally by detractions, rash judgments, &c. in what he persuades himself is no more than venial. He also often deceives himself in the interpretation of the law, and blinded by passion judges of it in a false light, straining all the precepts of the Church, even of the law of nature to his own desires; for example, magnifying every slight indisposition into a pretence for a dispensation from fasting, or taking too large allowances for collation: calling indecent freedoms innocent diversion, and the like. Daily indulging the passions of jealousy, hatred, revenge, sensuality, &c. in which many secret motions cannot be observed by a watchful eye, and a timorous conscience: whereas in the lukewarm Christian tepidity and negligence have, by weakening the lights of faith and fortifying the passions, spread such clouds over the soul, that she cannot judge truly of the law, or of what passes in her own thoughts, but will ever be apt to deceive herself. Above all, such persons are most easily deceived into sins of omission, and into a destruction of the queen of all virtues, charity. Is it not much to be feared the love of God above all things, reigns no longer in a life all made up of humour, softness, sloth, sensuality and self-love, especially as no mark, no character of that divine love appears in it. What appearance that his soul loves God above all things, (which is the essence of this divine virtue) who shews no disposition but that of a mercenary, the fear of hell, seeking nothing only to escape eternal punishment. 2dly, It is a mark of charity to be timorous, to exaggerate dangers and evils, to work her salvation in fear and trembling. *Sed aggravat, sed exaggerat universa*, says St. Bernard. This path has been that of all the just of all ages. How contrary is that of the tepid?

tepid? They throw themselves on the left side as far as they dare for fear of hell, and are afraid of the safe, of the right path. A third mark of charity is, that it is always active, always lively. Love is indefatigable; it never ceases. What sign of this divine fire in a heart of indolence and sloth to every thing that concerns the service of God. Ah, tepid soul! what reason have we to fear that threat of our Redeemer belongs to thee: *Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead. Apoc. ii. 1.* or that other: *Thou sayst; I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

Third Point.

Tepidity leads souls still farther into the most fatal ruin. This consequence is clear from experience. Reason also shews it: for by tepidity the source of graces is drained, and on the other side passions are strengthened. Without the succours of divine grace it is impossible for a soul to persevere in justice. As the hand of the Creator must always preserve the being it has once given us, or it would every instant fall into its original nothing: so the spiritual life of the soul must be always maintained by the grace of him who gave it. It is preserved only by this continual dependance on its succours. In the just, their fidelity to grace continually draws down other graces: but the negligence and infidelities of the lukewarm drain up that source. As a just punishment God withdraws them. Nothing can be more just than this his conduct. Tepid souls enter into judgment with God. You neglect to give him marks of your fidelity; you dispute every thing with him, and are upon your guard lest you should give him too much. You count with your God, as I may say, and watch to set his love bounds in your heart, and is it not reasonable

sonable he should prescribe bounds to his bounty to you, and repay your indifference for him by a return of indifference for you, and by refusing the liberal dispensation of his more powerful graces, which you will not prepare yourselves to receive, but make yourselves unworthy of. On the other hand, the passions are strengthened. Tepidity is an habitual indulgence of them. They cannot be conquered but by being openly resisted. Allowing them certain bounds, gratifying them to a certain point, fortifies and stirs them up, as throwing a small handful of food to a devouring lion does not satisfy his hunger, but rouses him and makes him more furious. They grow too violent to be restrained. At the same time, the path of sin becomes more open and easy. The heart has already made its approaches very near it, even to its very borders, and has but one small step more to take, and a step almost insensible: nay it often makes it without perceiving it is gone so far. And what makes the fall of a tepid soul quite desperate is, *Firstly*, she herself is ignorant of it; her misery is hid from her own eyes; like Jerusalem she knows not the judgments that are hanging over her head. How will she be surprized at the approach of death, when she will too late see her whole life past to be a chaos, which she cannot unravel, and in which she can see nothing clear, but that it was all filled with a love of the world, indolence in prayer and all virtue, duties satisfied by halves, secret antipathies, fondnesses, complaisances, and a thousand defects never discovered, and consequently never bewailed; she will then see she has been guilty of an uninterrupted ingratitude against God, and a continued infidelity to his inspirations. She will remember, that the unprofitable servant who hid his talent was condemned, and will tremble to see all her life or the greatest part of it has been unprofitable; made up of humour, inclination, self-love, sensual affections, pleasures and diversions. She will see the
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negligence with which she performed spiritual duties, and justly fear sacraments so received were sacrileges, and prayer so performed abomination before God. She will see that her tepid life not only robbed God of *her* own heart, but that her evil example, and vain conversations, treacherously defrauded him of the affections and service of others.

2dly, A tepid soul deprives herself of all the sweets of virtue, especially of that peace of conscience, and unction of the Holy Ghost, which make the yoke of Christ light and pleasant to the fervent. She must be a stranger to peace of conscience whose whole life appears even to herself to be spent in a thousand daily transgressions. She has no share in the unction of the Holy Ghost which spreads a sweetness over the austere practices of virtue, and fills zealous souls with consolation and joy. Nor has she any thing of that relish and pleasure which true love and fervour find in the exercises of piety. She bears the whole yoke of the law, without any ease or comfort under it, because she would only carry it by halves. Hence *St. Bernard* thus addresses himself to the tepid souls: *All of you know true virtue, and its paths; but the will of all is not the same in them. Some run, or rather fly, in every thing: to these watchings are short, abstinence sweet, and labour desirable. But others walk not so: they are only dragged, nay are scarce dragged or compelled by the fear of hell, and march with a dry heart, and with reluctance. There are many such who eat the same bread with us, sleep with us, pray with us, work with us; sharers with us in all our tribulations, but not in our comforts: truly miserable and unhappy.—These at length either sink under the burden and fall, or live on in a kind of hell on earth, never aspiring at the light of God's mercies, nor to that liberty of spirit, which alone makes the yoke sweet and the burden light.*

3dly,

3dly, Tepid souls by their habitual indolence are quite indisposed to be moved by divine grace. The Holy Ghost is all fire, all action, all vigour. But tepidity plunges a soul into a state of languishing, which enervates her, and takes away all her strength, all her life, and makes her even incapable of any good, or to be inspired with courage and vigour, without which there can be no virtue. Thus she is often more indisposed to receive any advantage from grace than habitual finners. The exterior means of grace are also unprofitable to her. The sacraments are dangerous in her state, and tepidly received, at best amuse her languishing, but do not heal her. Prayer, the great channel of graces, is little or no resource in the slothful manner in which she has recourse to it. Exhortations, pious books, alarming calls of God awake her not, because she flatters herself all goes well with her: Is not then her state in a manner desperate? *Cassian*, that great master of a spiritual life, writes thus of it: *Collat. iv. c. 19. We have often seen souls converted to a perfection from a state of coldness, that is, from worldlings and heathens; but have never seen any from amongst tepid Christians; who are also so detestable to God, that he commands his preachers by his prophet not to exhort them in vain, but abandon them as a fruitless barren ground, and sow the divine word on new hearts among heathens and finners. Plough up the new land, and do not sow on this ground overgrown with thorns. Jer. iv. 3. My soul, tremble at thy past lukewarm life; retrieve what thou hast lost by redoubling thy fervour from this moment.*

compunction and sincere repentance, do not destroy this perfection, as they are not faults of adhesion, but of surprize, and are immediately repaired again. But it is not so of habitual tepidity, or a deliberate resolution of not watching against venial sin, or not giving a man's self to God entirely, with his whole heart and with all his strength, which is the first and greatest of God's commandments. It is true indeed, all the means of perfection are not of precept to all; such as those we call evangelical counsels, which are great helps to the more easily attaining perfect virtue; but it is not in them that perfection consists. These, religious embrace, by their perpetual inclosure, renouncing the world and consecrating themselves to God by the three solemn vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, and by the observance of a rule consisting of various exercises of virtues. On account of such means of perfection, we call one state more perfect than another, either because it furnishes more easy and more powerful means of perfection, or affords occasions of more heroic acts of virtue. Thus *St. Thomas* observes, the state of Bishops is the most perfect of all states, as it furnishes the means of practising the greatest virtues in co-operating with Christ in his ministry in the conversion of souls: yet *SS. Augustin* and *Chrysostom* think few are saved in that holy character, but that more perish in it, because it is attended with great dangers and high obligations. Amongst religious orders those are esteemed most perfect which furnish the greatest means of perfection. But it is not the habit that makes the monk, nor the state of life that makes the saint: many in the most perfect states will be cast forth at the last day, and others from the east and from the west will be called in and seated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. The reason is because perfection consists only in the perfect love of God. He is the greatest saint who loves God most perfectly,
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and labours to do his will in all things with the greatest fervour. This is that perfection which is commanded not only to priests and religious, but to all men. But it is to be attained by different means as particular states and obligations differ. The tepid, therefore, who are only for a limited virtue,—for a certain degree of virtue,—violate the precept, by which all men are bound to aim at continually advancing in the love of God, and in serving him with all their strength. Christ said not to the apostles only, but to all his followers; *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Matt. v. 48. And St. Paul uses the word saint for a christian, because every christian is bound to be a saint. *To all the saints at Ephesus. To all the saints at Philippi. To the saints at Colossa, &c.* None but saints can enter heaven: *nothing defiled can enter there.* As then we desire to reign in heaven, we must all aim to be saints, all strive to be perfect. Yes, my soul; God says to thee, as he did to Abraham: *Walk before me, and be perfect.*

Second Point.

Many are affrighted at the very name of perfection, and imagine it breathes nothing but tears and excessive austerities; or that it consists in raptures and lofty contemplations, of which they are incapable. Several think it is incompatible with their state of life, and the care of worldly affairs. This is all mistake. It neither consists in, nor requires extraordinary rigors, or high contemplations; it requires neither learning, nor parts, nor a great genius; it consists in a heart capable of loving God. This all men have; the poor and the simple have often less obstacles than the rich or the learned. Nor is perfection inconsistent with worldly states and callings; on the contrary it perfects them all; for it is the perfect christian that makes the best prince, the best courtier, the best citizen, the best

tradesman, the best master, and the best servant. God invites all to perfection, he enjoins it to all men. It must then consist in something of which all are capable, and which is easy and open to all, to the great, the small, the learned and the unlearned. For he declares: *The precept which I command thee is not above thee, nor placed far from thee, nor situate in heaven, nor beyond the sea;—but this my command is near thee very much, in thy own mouth and in thy heart to do it.* Deut. xxx. 11. 14. It is entirely so: for perfection consists first in the performing the great duties of religion in the most fervent dispositions, as prayer, frequenting the sacraments, &c. 2dly, In performing our ordinary actions and every part of our respective professions in the most perfect manner; and out of the purest and most perfect motive of doing by them the will of God. For what is perfect virtue but the doing the will of God? It is his most holy will that is the rule of all virtue. The merit of actions must be equal if his will be equally found in them, and those are most perfect that are most conformable to it. Now it is evidently the holy will of God, that every man acquit himself in the best manner of all the duties of his state in the world. All lawful states are good and necessary for the conservation and government of the world. God is the author of them all, and as he is the all-wise and holy governor of this world which he created, he would have all these professions subsist and carried on well in it. Therefore a master employed in looking after the affairs of his family, a nobleman in managing his estate, a husbandman in his tillage, a servant in his master's business, does the will of God. This is so true, that were any man to neglect the affairs of his province, though to pray, or to visit hospitals, he would sin before God. *If any man has not care of his own, principally his domestics, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, by transgressing one of the first duties of religion.*
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The reason is, whatever holy action we do, we please not God unless we do what he requires of us; no more, says St. Francis of Sales, (*Maxims*) than a painter drawing an eagle pleases him that desired a picture of a bee. For it can never be agreeable to God if we give him one thing when he requires another. Hence our divine Redeemer coming to convert men to the service of his heavenly Father, did not displace them or make them change their lawful conditions. And St. Paul bids those who when called to the faith were free, to remain free, and those that were slaves to remain content and serve God in that condition. He only exhorts every one to walk worthy the vocation in which he was called. Thus true virtue is most consistent with all lawful states; it requires little more than the same actions, only it adds to them exactitude and constancy, and it ennobles them, by the supernatural motive of the love of God, and the pure view of doing his will. The same we may say of all the necessities of nature, as eating, sleeping, &c. all of which virtue sanctifies by performing them for the holy will of God.

This truth may be also demonstrated by many other principles. For it is evident, that virtue ought to be habitual to us, and the practice of it continual. We must be holy not by fits, but by habit, both at home and abroad, in all places, and at all times. Consequently, our perfection cannot consist in great and extraordinary actions, which must of course be rare, as occasions of them seldom occur. Our life is made of ordinary actions. There are many great saints before God, who never did any thing extraordinary for him, and their sanctity is more secure because hid from the eyes of the world, and consisting in what is common, and what others do equally with them, but not in the same spirit. They are saints not by works which appear before men, but by the interior virtue of their heart. This stamps a value on all they do.

do. By this they perfectly seek the will of God in all the common actions of life, knowing it is only his holy will that gives every virtue its value, that without it the greatest actions are nothing, and with it the meanest become highly meritorious. We read of nothing extraordinary in the life of the Queen of Saints, the blessed Virgin Mary. Our Saviour himself, who came to be our mode of perfection, who always did what was most pleasing to his Father, and, as the Jews said of him, did all things well and the best, led a hidden life for thirty years, in which he did nothing great or wonderful. The infinite perfection of his divine actions consisted in this, that whether he ate or slept, worked with his supposed father or helped his poor mother, or whatever else he did, his motive was always to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father. Thus he gave us a pattern of our perfection in all our respective stations and private lives. As St. Francis of Sales remarks, Those then are to be blamed, who engaged in any vocation, desire the opportunities of others, neglecting their own, and consuming themselves and their time in unprofitable wishes. *Introduet. p. 2. ch. 2.* My soul, do thou, on the contrary, bless God and be filled with joy, that he has put the means of thy sanctification so easy, so near to thee, in thy own breast. I only have to do in a true and perfect spirit what I otherwise do every day, to be a great saint. I will then say with the spouse in the Canticles: *I have reserved all my fruits for you. Cant. viii. 13.* doing all the actions of my life, small as well as great for your love, my God.

Third Point.

God has annexed his greatest graces and promises to the smallest actions performed with fidelity and fervour. One single heroic sacrifice in Abraham obtained for him the highest recompence. One small obedience in Saul had established his kingdom

dom for ever. The Wiseman finds the great commendation of the valiant woman in this that she was industrious in handling her distaff. It is thus by small things a soul attracts the favour of her heavenly spouse. Indeed, what are the greatest actions to God? They can be no accession to his glory, or to the bliss which he possesses in himself, and which is independent on all creatures: nor does he stand in need of any external glory from them. He is infinitely above the greatest homage we can pay him. If he accepts our little services, it is from his goodness. He regards in them the affection, not the action, the heart not the hand. An heroic fidelity in doing all our actions for God with exactitude and fervour is the greatest sacrifice of ourselves, and the most honourable to God of all that we can offer him. It is a continual crucifixion and sacrifice of self-love, humour and all our passions. It is to make God truly the Lord of our whole lives,—we then give to him not certain works set apart for him, not some passing interrupted actions, intermingled with many others of self-love and the world, but make to him the continual sacrifice of our whole selves, with all our affections, state, employs, thoughts, words and works, even every breath we draw. We are all his, for *we are his workmanship in Christ Jesus. Eph. xi. 8.* We are all his, being bought by him at a great price, the blood of the immaculate Lamb. *You are not your own therefore,* says St. Paul, *Non estis vestri.* Hence the same apostle says: *None of us lives to himself. Nemo nostrum sibi vivit. Rom. xiv. 7.* Observe how general his words are: No one, neither king, nor statesman, nor lawyer, nor labourer, nor married man: and no moment of our lives, neither sleeping nor waking, nor working, nor playing, nor eating, nor conversing. We must be *pleasing to God through all things; fructifying in every good work.* Why? because *we are all the Lord's. Domini sumus. Rom. xiv.* Hence he so frequently exhorts all states:

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Let your conversation be worthy of the gospel. Phil. i. 27.

Remember then, my soul, always to walk worthy of God. *Ut ambuletis digné Deo.* Living and breathing only to him; as the blessed in heaven live only to him. I will never use my heart, my hands, my eyes, my words or thoughts to content my humour; but only for the service of my heavenly spouse.

M E D I T A T I O N VI.

ON THE MANNER OF PERFORMING WELL OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS, AGAINST TEPIDITY.

TO perform our ordinary actions well, they must be done, 1. with a good intention, 2. with fervour, 3. with regularity and exactitude.

First Point.

It is not the doing of good actions, but the doing of them well, that will make them agreeable to God. *They who shall do just things in a just manner, shall be justified. Sap. vi. 11.* The difference between the saint, the tepid christian and the sinner consists not always in the actions, but in the manner of performing them, the intention and fervency with which they are done. This makes the same work perfect, imperfect or sinful. *The light of thy body is thy eye, says Christ, if thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darkness. Mat. vi. 22, 23.* He calls the intention the light and the eye of the soul, because by it we direct our actions to God, or to other ends, and our actions derive their value from their intention. If a man gives an alms out
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of vanity, the action is sinful;—if out of mere natural compassion, it is a moral action, but not meritorious in the eye of heaven;—if out of the love of God, and to do *his* will, it is then meritorious and an action of charity. In the same manner, our actions, to serve the necessities of nature, as eating, sleeping, moderate recreation, and the employments of our state of life, are made by the intention, *bad*, if in them we seek ourselves, by avarice, sloth, or sensuality, or even if we neglect to refer them to God: or *good*, if we do them in the view of God's will, and for his love. For it is his will that we maintain our being and strength for his service, and use moderately certain lawful comforts of life, and necessary recreation to recruit our strength, and go on with greater fervour and cheerfulness in the labours of virtue. As a traveller on the road calls sometimes to repose and refresh himself, and does not by that loiter or lose his time, providing he rests not too frequently or too long, and always remembers he is but refreshing himself the better to continue his journey. Sloth and passions are both the motive and the effect of too great indulgence of nature, of superfluity and delicacy in table, or of spending too much time in diversions, or of eagerness and attachment to them. On this account those cannot but be criminal who employ a considerable part of their time in amusements and diversions. But moderate relaxation is sanctified by a good intention, as are all the employments of every good state of life: for it is the will of God that the gentleman look after his family and estate, the tradesman after his business, &c. Nay, almighty God, by placing them in that station, allotted them that employment as their proper exercise. When he placed Adam in the garden of Eden, he commanded him to prune and keep it. With what care then ought not I to watch over my heart, and form this good intention in all my actions? This is the great art of arts

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which makes every moment, every action of my life a seed of an immortal crown. This is the true philosophical stone which turns even dirt into gold, and which makes my whole life a perfect uninterrupted sacrifice to God. *Et erunt plebi illius aurum.* Job xxvii. 6. But it is a gross mistake that a speculative offering in mere words is sufficient for this: or that some sign without reflection should have this effect. The intention must really move the heart, and be the true cause of the action. It must be carefully and seriously made in the morning offering all the actions of the day to God. Nor will this alone suffice. This interrupted by various distractions cannot really influence all the works and thoughts of the whole day. It must be renewed frequently and attentively at different times in the day, and particularly in the beginning of all the chief actions. As the archer levels his eye to hinder the dissipation of his sight, and keep the sign of its direction strait, so must we shut our hearts to all sinister respects, and place our whole view and attention on God and the accomplishment of his will. The primitive christians did this by making the sign of the cross on their foreheads before and after every action, before rising from a seat or sitting down, lighting a fire or candle or extinguishing it, going out of doors or coming in. This Tertullian witnesses. *De coras. mil.* We may do it by privately making that holy sign on our breast, seriously offering our heart and action to the honour of the adorable Trinity through the merits of Christ's passion; or at least, by saying in our hearts most fervently: *Purely for thy holy honour and love, O God.* Or, *For thee purely I make this visit, eat, suffer, labour, &c.* Or, addressing ourselves to our Saviour thus: *I do this in union with thy divine intention in actions on earth: to the honour of thy heavenly Father I do this: may the fervour of thine supply the imperfection of mine.* Or, sometimes thinking on the fervour and purity of the intention
with

with which our blessed Virgin swept the house, or did other like actions, unite our spirit for the same end; or with that with which the angels and other blessed spirits incessantly praise the Lord.

Second Point.

This intention to be perfect must be pure, *i. e.* without any mixture of seeking ourselves. But how rare is this perfect purity of intention! Many went to see Jesus, but not for him alone, but also to see Lazarus.

It must also be fervent. Our Saviour called it his food to do the will of his Father. How solicitous and ardent are courtiers to prevent the least motions of their king's commands? *St. Dorotheus* excited himself to continual fervour by remembering how in the study of profane eloquence in the world he thought all hours too short, forgot the necessities of his body, and could not eat without having a book open before him, to read at the same time. How much greater ardor, said he, ought I to bring in labouring for virtue and heaven. *Doctr. 10. bill. part. 7. 4.* Had we a true idea of heaven, or of the majesty of God, our fervour would be continual and without bounds. It is fervour which draws down God's graces. *Cursed is he that does the work of God negligently.* An ancient abbot seeing a monk labouring slothfully, asked him for whom he worked. For God's honour, answered he. Are you not then ashamed, said the abbot, to do this more slothfully for God than you do for me? Our Judge will reproach us for such sloth in the service of God, as he did the Bishop of Sardis: *I find not thy works full before my God.* Apoc. iii. 2. The perfection and recompence of our actions depend entirely on the spirit and fervour of soul with which they are done. According to this, actions produce their fruit, some a hundred-fold, some fixty, some thirty. *Matt. xiii. 8.* Thus all the glory of a soul is

from her inward disposition. *Pf. xlv. 14.* Nor does God consider how much, but from how ardent an affection she gives. *Non quantum, sed ex quanto. Cypr. de opere & eleem.* He valued more the widows two mites than the large alms of all the rest. It is thy intention and fervour that gives the name or stamp of value to thy actions, says *St. Ambrose, l. 1. Offic. c. 30.* From how great ardor it proceeds, just so much is it valued at. See how just is thy Judge: he first asks thy own soul, how she values her work. Nay he equally rewards the will, though the work do not follow. The will is acceptable according to what it has, says the apostle. As much as the will increases, so much is the merit enhanced. God counted to Abraham the sacrifice of his son as actually done, though he had only executed it in his intention. *Because thou hast done this thing, and has not spared thy son, &c.* A devout preacher reaping no fruit by his labours amongst souls, said: Not the less, upon this account, O Lord, wilt thou repay my labours. *Non minus solves, Domine, non minus solves.*

My soul, what ought to be thy care always to increase this fervour in every action! For this end do every work as if it were to be the last of thy life, or as if it were the only sacrifice of thyself thou couldst ever make to God. This is the advice of *St. Tho. of Aquin. Opusc. 62. t. 17.* We ought to do every action in union with all the fervour of Christ's infinite actions to supply our weakness, and of all the fervour of the saints in heaven and on earth, and out of all possible earnestness, as if all our salvation, all the praise of God, and good of souls depended on it, as if the only action we had to do was to glorify God. Take care in doing any action not to be eager to go to the next. This would impair thy earnestness in thy present employ. Do what thou art about well and with thy utmost diligence; then calmly give thy attention to the following. Let thy fervour be always sedate and calm, without hurry or anxiety; yet never let it flag. The continual practice of placing thyself in the presence of

of God by frequent aspirations, will be the greatest help to this. Love will give new wings to every work as it does to the angels in executing God's will.

Third Point.

Regularity is a condition necessary to a virtuous life. It is itself a virtue, and adds a value to every action. God is the God of order; he shews how agreeable it is to him by the wonderful and beautiful order which shines in the heavens and their movements, and in all his other works. Besides, regularity is necessary to fix inconstancy and fickleness. Fervour does not always remain equal. Regularity prevents its slackening, and keeps us from neglecting any of our exercises of piety. One of the greatest advantages in a religious life is the perfect regularity, which then chalks out the will of God in every action and circumstance. Even in the world, it is impossible for any one to serve God, who does not reduce his life to some degree of rule, and who has not fixed times for prayer and other general duties. God can never be served in a life of confusion. Disorder is from the devil. Holy writ describes hell as a place where no order dwells. The saints all lived regular lives even in courts, as King David, St. Lewis, K. Alfred, &c. Exactitude is also requisite in our actions, to perform all of them in their due time, place and manner. A fidelity in giving each action all its due circumstances is extremely pleasing to God, and a failure in any one must always be an imperfection and lessen its effect. This exactness on our side moves almighty God abundantly to repay our fidelity with his extraordinary graces and favours. *Thou wilt be holy with the holy, and elect with the elect, and wilt be perverse with the perverse.*

Thus, my soul, regulate all thy actions; consider them as the will of God, perform them in a true spirit of religion, purely in the view of God, and
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for his love, with fervour, order and exactitude, studying to be *perfect and failing in nothing*, *Ja. i. 4*, that when thy Lord comes thou be found a faithful servant. According to the advice of the Wiseman, *Eccl. xxxiii. 23. Excel, i. e.* aim at what is heroical, *in all thy works*. Never desire impossible circumstances, nor other states of life. God by placing thee, in thy particular station, has marked out thy exercises and the path of perfection in which thou art to sanctify thyself. Men seek to confound the paths of virtue, and to be what they are not, because they would follow virtue by caprice, inclination and humour. They mistake a restlessness of mind for zeal. Fall not into that stratagem of the enemy of thy salvation, *and lift not thy eyes to riches thou canst not obtain. Prov. xxiii. 5*. Apply thyself with ardor to the virtues suitable to thy state, and to perform all its duties and functions, as the work God has allotted to thee. It is the perfection of thy station, not that of a bishop, a monk or a prince, which he expects at thy hands. Never look on any action of thy life as too small to be offered to God, or not worth thy utmost attention. He is great and rich, but he knows thou art little and poor. This is what thou hast in thy hands to give him; it is all thou art worth for the present. Give him this then with a great heart, *corde magno & animo volenti*, and so disposed that if thou hadst any thing greater to offer, thou wouldst be most ready to do it. He will look upon it as done, for he is infinitely rich and good, and wants not our gifts, but is only infinitely desirous of our heart and good will. Increase then and dilate thy heart and affections in every action by desires. If thou weepst before God, with thou couldst bring the whole earth to weep with thee: if thou offerest thy heart, with thou couldst offer him the hearts and affections of all creatures, and rejoice that he possesses infinite joy and bliss within himself. If thou labourest for him, desire to spend the last drop of
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of thy blood in his service, for so great a master, and so great a glory. Before every action, by a short aspiration offer it with fervour to God, and beg his grace to do his will in it as perfectly as thy heart is able, saying, *Incline unto my aid*, or the like; and wishing it could do it more perfectly, and in a manner worthy so great and so good a Lord: to supply thy deficiencies, offer the actions of Christ, cover thine with them to receive an ample benediction, and to pay an homage worthy thy God. Thy heavenly Father will no sooner have felt the sweet odour of his Son's garments, but he will accept thy sacrifice, embrace thee tenderly, and enrich thee with his gifts: for *in his beloved Son he has made us acceptable*. Ephes. i. 6.

But the recompences promised ought to excite our fervour in good works, which produce an eternal weight of glory. Even a cup of cold water given for God will have its reward. *Mat. x. 30.* God counts every hair of his elect, every step for his service. What a rich mine is here opened to us? What a wonderful commerce? We give temporal for eternal, light and easy for what is immense. All the actions of our lives are seeds of eternity. Our Saviour assures us of the very smallest, that it shall not lose its reward. *Mat. x. 42.* No: it shall shine for *perpetual eternities*. *Dan. xii.* If we neglect to lay up stores of good works now, we shall beg hereafter when it will be too late. *The slothful man would not plough for the cold. He shall therefore beg in summer, and nothing shall be given him. Prov. xx. 4. He shall not be crowned who has not fought lawfully. 1 Cor. xi. 8.* Heaven is our inheritance; but by Adam's fall we lost our title to it. Christ restored us again to it by his passion, but on condition it should be to us a kingdom of conquest. It is to be taken by us as it were by main force. *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away. Mat. xi. 12.* What things
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a man shall have sown by his works, such also shall hereap.
 My soul, chuse a good method and a good guide or director in the paths of virtue; but do not lightly change or forsake it.

M E D I T A T I O N VII.

ON THE DELAY OF REPENTANCE.

1. **A** DELAY of repentance in a state of mortal sin is a grievous crime.
2. It increases the difficulties of a conversion.
3. It is the high road to final impenitence.

First Point.

1. A great obstacle to souls in the service of God is a delay of repentance. Sinners design to be saved; but put off their conversion from day to day. By this stratagem the devil secures them to himself. For it not only holds them in his chains, but is a new sin, and leads ordinarily to final impenitence and eternal reprobation. He who is in a state of mortal sin and defers his conversion for any considerable time, sins grievously; and this on many accounts. Such a delay is a sin against the charity which he owes to his own soul by exposing it to the imminent danger of damnation by sudden death, of which there is always a moral danger in a considerable space of time. To undertake in such a state a dangerous expedition or a sea voyage, would undoubtedly be a mortal sin. There is always no less danger of a sudden death in a long delay, considering the innumerable accidents to which human life is subject. Therefore to live so much unprepared, must be a mortal sin and an extreme

treme folly in a point of this utmost consequence. Is there not a moral danger of being surprised by sudden death in any one month, or a less term? Many thousands, doubtless, now suffer in hell, who were suddenly cut off, soon after committing one mortal sin. In an affair of such infinite consequence, it must be the greatest madness to sleep, even one night, in such a state, without making a most sincere act of contrition, and the warmest purpose of amendment.

2. He who defers his conversion, exposes himself generally to immediate danger of falling into other mortal sins. For experience shews that a soul remaining wilfully under the slavery of the devil is easily drawn, nay sinks of herself, continually lower in it. *A sin which repentance does not blot out, by its own weight draws to another sin*, says St. Gregory the Great (*Mor. l. 25. c. 9.*) which sentence has passed from St. Thomas into a maxim of the schools. To some persons never so short a delay may be an immediate occasion of sin; and consequently is itself a new mortal sin.

A delay of repentance transgresses that divine precept. *Defer not to be converted to the Lord.* Eccl. v. 8.

We are obliged to an immediate reconciliation with an offended brother: much more with God, if we have injured him. We are bound immediately to restore what belongs to our neighbour, it must therefore be an injustice to God to delay restoring to him the heart which belongs to him.

Such a delay shews an obstinate attachment to sin, and is an interpretative choice of God's enmity. *Hast thou offended God and forgettest it? Behold a second offence and a second enmity*, says St. Chrysostom (*Hom. 42. in 2 Cor.*) It is highly to undervalue the divine friendship, the most inestimable of all goods. The reasons are urged by St. Thomas (2. 28, 29, 62, a ult.) St. Bonaventure (*in 4 Dist.*

17, 10, a. 2.) *St. Antoninus* (3 p. tit. 14. c. 18. n. 2.) &c.

3. One who remains in the state of mortal sin, loses the merits of all the good works he does for that time. He loses all the advantages for which he lives, who does not live to God, says *St. Augustin*, *Perdit quod vivit qui Deo non vivit*. To choose such a state must be a strange insensibility to a man's own great interest.

Does not the very misery of his own condition move the sinner to hasten out of it! He is fallen into the stinking mire of sin, and is become horrible in the sight of God and his angels: yet he defers to cleanse himself. Sin, worse than any robber, has stripped his immortal soul of all her spiritual riches and graces, without leaving so much as one: yet he does not hasten to recover so great a treasure. His soul has received a mortal wound; yet he gives it time to grow incurable, before he applies a remedy. Had a man drunk poison, could he be one moment at ease till he had taken an antidote to repel it? Had he received a wound in his body, would he put off the cure till it might mortify and form a gangrene? Had he been robbed in his temporal goods, would he neglect immediately seeking to recover them? Strange blindness! not to do for his immortal soul, what he would be so earnest to do for the least temporal commodity. *You wish for a long life*; says *St. Augustin*, (*Serm. 20. T. 5. p. 109.*) *only to repent hereafter, and in the mean while lead a bad life. Thus you wish for a long evil. Why do not you rather desire a long good? You would have all other things good: a good garment, a good villa, a good house: you only choose a bad life; and yet you prefer life to all those other things* Expostulate a little, my soul, with the delaying sinner, on this his insensibility in his own regard: expostulate also with him on his conduct towards God. Let him, if he is able, stand the insulting reproaches
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of his own conscience in the mean time. Let him sink under the confusion with which they must cover him.

God commands, invites and presses the sinner in the most tender manner to return to him. Hear his sweet voice, my soul. He cries out: *Son, give me thy heart. Prov. xxiii. 25.* It has been long tyrannized over and harrassed under the slavery of the devil, the world and its merciless passions. It has long been a stranger to peace and true comfort. It is mine; it was created only for me; and it can find no rest but in me. Can you refuse so long to give it peace, to restore it to its centre, and offer it to me who am its maker, its happiness and its God. O souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, framed by the hand of God only to love him, harden not your hearts against his most merciful call. But what do the delayers answer?—What I dare scarce repeat for horror. *Command, say they, command again: expect, expect again: Isa. xxviii. 10. Who ever heard such horrible things? Jer. xviii. 13.*

Unthinking sinners, is this the manner in which you treat your kindest God? Are these your thanks for his mercies? *Is this what you return to the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Deut. xxxii. 6.* Because God is so merciful as to have hitherto borne you with patience, you presume to go on in offending him in hopes of the like impunity. *Because sentence is not immediately executed upon the wicked, therefore the sons of men commit evil without fear. Eccles. viii. 11.* What is this consequence they draw? Because God is good, they will be boldly wicked. O ingratitude! O insensibility! O blasphemy! One would imagine by these proceedings that sinners take Almighty God only for a God in jest. But he will arise and revenge his own cause, and strike such presumption with his most just, but most terrible judgments. For this delay is not only a horrible crime and presumption, but also the high road to final impenitence.

Second Point.

1. The delaying sinner is in the high road to final impenitence; for he promises himself three things, which are no ways in his power, viz. time to come, grace, and a will disposed to repent. Each of these points deserves to be considered apart. First, as to the will which he thinks himself most certainly master of, it will in all appearance be more averse to the beginning of this work hereafter than it is at present, and it will certainly have much greater difficulties to encounter with. For we must observe that his will cannot form one good true desire towards a conversion, without grace, which will be much weakened and withdrawn on one side, whilst he on the other becomes every day more and more incapable of seeking God. So that he will only have such a command of his will, such a power as was Pharaoh's, such as the sinner absolutely can, but, morally speaking, never will use, and which will only serve for his guilt.

He thinks difficulties too great at present for want of courage to undertake the work at present. He would be glad to wait till his chains fall of themselves, and a conversion may cost him no violence. But his expectation is chimerical and extravagant. Passions can never be overcome, nor habits broken, without conflicts. Difficulties will grow much greater by a delay; for by it a sinner is farther removed from God and more deeply engaged in his criminal habits. As many days of delay, so many sins; as many abuses of grace, so many new chains. If a man found a hundred pound weight heavy, would he wait till his burden should be increased to a thousand? Or if one single chain was hard to break, would he defer till his fetters were doubled? Yet this is the extravagance of the delaying sinner. Old age itself, which abates the heat of youth, strengthens habits long cherished. *A physician easily*

easily cuts off a new distemper: a long sickness perplexes him. Eccl. x. 12.

The very habit of delaying, and the fear of setting about the work, grow upon the soul exceedingly. This the experience of all ages shews the delayers. To-morrow consumes years and spins out the longest age; and is still always to-morrow, never to-day, and at the end farther from beginning than at first. This the very heathen poets and philosophers witness. One of them very justly compares the delayer to a fool sitting on the bank of a river till the stream run dry that he may pass over it. *He*

Waits till the river pass away, but lo!

Ceaseless it flows, and will for ever flow.

And another, — till the hindmost chariot wheel overtake the first.

Penance now seems a burden to him. This is because he has not as yet taken the wings of fervour, and loves still to crawl on the dunghill of his affections. Let him by groans and sighs now invite Jesus into his heart, lay open his miseries to him, and implore his pity and pardon. Thus his sloth will be expelled, and the difficulties vanish. What will he gain by waiting till these be much increased? Ah! It is now time for him to banish sin from his heart, and rescue it from the chains of the devil. *The time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles. 1 Pet. iv. 3. It is time that an end be put to sin, and that iniquity be blotted out, and eternal justice reign. Dan. ix. 34.*

Third Point.

It belongs to the justice of God, and to the fidelity which he owes to himself and to his own threats, to punish and disappoint the delayers insolence. He is guilty of tempting God many ways, of presuming on his mercy, and of abusing his grace. He arrogates to himself the assurance of time and
grace,

grace, two things purely in the disposal of God; he fixes God a time for his mercy; he designs to defeat his justice by a cheat, and he resists his most gracious calls.

He promises to himself that he shall have time to do penance hereafter. But of time God has reserved the entire disposal to himself. Who in his senses would walk and sleep on the sharp edge of a fatal precipice? You are here every moment in imminent danger of gliding into hell: as every moment some accident may bereave you of life. If you live, what prospect does even life afford? Is continuance in sin a means to incline God to mercy? Who sues for pardon, refrains from new insults: these obstruct mercy; they cannot dispose for it.

With time, grace is also necessary for a true conversion. And will not God justly refuse to such a presumptuous delay, a gratuitous gift which he owes to no sinner? Such an arrogance certainly calls for this punishment. The deferring sinner designedly would rob God of the best part of his life, and that which he is most jealous of, to consecrate it to the devil; and reserve to him only the wretched remains, the dregs which are the refuse of the world and sin. *Et de reliquo ejus idolum faciam. Isa. xlv. 19.*

What is still more injurious, he endeavours to put a cheat upon Almighty God, and to get heaven by a trick. For what is his conduct better than this? God assures us we cannot enjoy both this world and the next, or join together the pleasures of sin here and his eternal joys. But the wretch designs as it were to defeat his threat, and the just law of his providence, by a formal project of enjoying this world; and yet, by an after-game of a late repentance, gaining heaven in the end. But God is not to be imposed upon by foolish impiety: He is above human cunning. He will defeat such impious senseless measures. This intended repentance must

must be his work: his grace must effect it. To punish such insults and presumption, will he not withdraw his more powerful graces, and abandon such a soul to a spiritual blindness, to a false death-bed repentance, or sudden death without even an appearance of any repentance, which will put the seal to her reprobation. *Ye have said: We have struck a bargain with death, and have made a compact with hell. Your bargain with death shall be made void, and your contract with hell shall not stand. Isaiah xlviii. 18.*

The insult of a delay implies likewise such an open abuse of grace, that if we again consider this circumstance, we still more clearly see that it is a crime most heinous, and which calls for an extraordinary vengeance upon the sinner. Can we reflect on the baseness of his conduct, and not cry out in astonishment with the prophet; *God gave him place of repentance, and he abuses it to pride. Job xxiv. 23.* What is more; God solicits him to return with the most tender fatherly affection. He addresses to him his prophets, whose words are daily denounced to him, and his ministers rising early in the morning, by whose mouths, both in public and in private, he employs promises, threats and all other means to conquer his obstinacy. Not content with those exterior calls, he speaks to him continually inwardly in the bottom of his heart by holy inspirations and remorse, crying out without ceasing, with a secret, but piercing voice, within his own soul, and pressing him now to put an end to his crimes, to give peace to his poor heart so long worried and torn by black guilt, cruel remorse, and restless passions; to banish thence those hellish fiends whose chains he so miserably drags, and groans under; to renounce a world and pleasures whose emptiness every where pursues him, and to begin to live to God, and to secure present and eternal happiness and joy. The sinner thus pursued and besieged

sieged by the mercies of his God every where and on every side, yet hardens himself against them, shuts his ears to these calls, fights against him with his own gifts, making use of his graces and benefits only to offend him and fly in his face, and even to serve as motives and instruments to sin. Of this God complains: *Thou hast made me serve in thy sins. Isa. xliii. 24.* Can the fidelity he owes to his own justice and honour suffer this? Can he see himself treated more contemptuously than the meanest servant, by a base sinner whom he desires to save only out of mercy, but who bids him go away with his graces, wait till he has surfeited himself with sin, and then come and visit him again; can God, I say, see this, and bear it? No. He declares by his prophets, that his mercy condemned will at length be converted into fury, that he will answer such a contempt by a silence for the future, the most dreadful of all his punishments, and will watch over such ungrateful insolent souls to their destruction to which they are in the high road, and which he will suffer them to compleat by a false death-bed repentance; or will perhaps not afford them even an opportunity of that, suddenly cutting them off in the height of their career, and foreclosing for ever their vain hope. *Vigilabo super eos in malum. Jer. xliv. 27.*

MEDITATION VIII.

ON DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

1. **O**FTEN sudden death excludes a possibility of doing penance in the last sickness.
2. Such a repentance, if performed, is generally false, because only forced.

3. A conversion then meets with the greatest obstacles.

First Point.

1. Death-bed repentance is commonly the most wretched and treacherous plank which unthinking delayers are at last, often unawares, reduced to trust their eternity to. It is called a treacherous plank, because the very possibility of endeavouring one cannot be relied on; and also because if attempted, it is usually false. Often does sudden death prevent a power of so much as thinking of a conversion in a sinner's last moments. What assurance has he that he will be forewarned of its approach? May it not seize him on a sudden as a vultur does its unattentive prey? May not lightning, a precipice, a water, a stone, a chance shot or stroke, a slip of a horse, a fall of a tree or house, a thief, a treacherous hand, or some other out of a thousand like accidents, in the twinkling of an eye cut the thread of his life: and in a moment lodge him in hell?

Even barring external accidents, may not a sudden revolution of humours, a violent apoplexy, a polypus of the heart, or some like unforeseen disorder bereave him of life at once, leaving scarce one breath of interval between all the signs of perfect health and the sleep of death, or at least the privation of all the senses! Such accidents are common. How often have I heard that one was drowned, found dead in his bed, fallen down dead while walking, conversing at table, at play, or the like? The news of such a death alarmed indeed the person's friends, but the case had nothing in it miraculous, nothing at which, according to the common course of things, they ought to be surprised, nothing but what, according to the ordinary laws of nature and providence, may happen to any man any single day of his life. The delaying sinner has above all others the greatest reason to apprehend

hend left, in punishment of his presumption, the just hand of God, which rules and orders all things, should conduct natural causes to be thus the instruments of his vengeance on him.

2. But he hopes that will not be his misfortune. He must however allow that it may be so, and that by his rashness he exposes his eternity to a perhaps. Ah! In temporal concerns, in last wills and contracts, men carefully add provisoes and caveats to exclude not only probabilities but even mere possibilities. But in their all, in their eternal salvation, they are content to rely on a perhaps, and can sleep under such a dreadful uncertainty; nay, of their own free deliberate choice, trust it to a thing, for which above all things in the world they can the least answer. If sudden deaths were more extraordinary, and examples of them much rarer than they are, yet the deferring sinner ought still to dread his danger from that quarter, by a justly deserved judgment. Moreover, even the deaths of those who die by lingering diseases are most of them sudden. Several distempers are treacherous, and do not forebode death by any symptom before the patient, by a sudden revolution of humours in his body, falls into a short agony, and is soon carried off. Again, deaths even in distempers often proceed from some latent inward gangrene; in which cases no danger is prognosticated before death, as its true cause is hidden and foreign to the visible distemper.

When the distemper itself visibly and gradually leads to death, still men most frequently die suddenly. God to punish the sinner's delay, often permits the spirit of lying to deceive him to the end, as he did *Ahab*. *And the Lord said: who will deceive Ahab? And an evil Spirit went forth and stood before the Lord, and said: I will deceive him. I will go forth and will be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said: Thou shalt deceive and*

and prevail. 3 *Reg.* xxii, 21, 22. So does he permit the lying spirit to deceive the dying sinner.

He usually flatters himself as long as possible, out of the love and hopes of life, and a dread of seriously undertaking the work of his conversion. His friends concur for fear of alarming him. Out of the same motive, the physicians generally study to feed him with vain hopes, not to damp his spirits. Thus he goes on, being also himself desirous to be deceived. Even the last efforts of nature just before his agony, are often interpreted as symptoms of good hopes. It is often not before he is falling into his agony, that the danger is openly apprehended. Then the house is an uproar: all cry out: He is dying; he is dying. A priest is sent for, who perhaps is sick or absent: an affair which never happened before may have just then, by God's providence, called him abroad. Or he comes indeed, but has not the key of the sinner's heart, nor talents to be of any great use in moving him, who is scarce in a condition even to think himself. Or he finds him speechless, unable even to give a squeeze of the hand or other sign of knowledge. He is perhaps out of his senses, or at least already half-dead.

As before a conversion was put off by weeks, months or seasons, now it is for days or at least hours. He alleges present pains and incapacity; and hopes in an hour or two to be better disposed and more at his ease. If a confession was more early extorted from him, it was done with so much unwillingness, so much by halves, and so much in hopes of a possibility of a recovery, as to be very far from securing his great affair. Thus the death of the sinner is generally unforeseen and unprepared. If a preparation be thought of, it is lame, and only justifies the old comparison that, Not to repent till the approach of death is to do like a man who should only begin to dig wells to quench the flames, when his house is already on fire.

In these streights the enemy easily draws such an unhappy soul into presumption or into despair; with the miserable man mentioned by *St. Gregory the Great*, who expired lamentably crying out, without being heard by God: *Truce till morning, Truce till morning.*

Second Point.

Penance done by the sinner only at the sight of death is generally false, because often grounded on motives of natural fear, or at least such as are insufficient for a true conversion and perfect change of heart. He has hitherto put off his repentance, and would still if he could. His disposition for delaying is the same as before. This very habit of deferring reigns still in his heart as much as ever, and hinders him from exerting to the utmost even the weak endeavours he is now capable of. If he does some little, this is only because he sees the power of putting off now taken from him. As he has always been a man of projects and resolutions, such he still remains, and such he dies. He is big with schemes and half-wills, employs himself in them to the last breath, but undertakes nothing perfectly.

His attachments to his other criminal habits equally remain; only their objects are removed for the present. For proof hereof, if he recovers he will continue the same man he was. He indeed cries out for pardon, and lifts up his eyes to heaven; but it is only because he sees the earth flying from him, and the divine sword hanging naked over his head. His sorrow is not for the injury he has done to God, nor out of any sentiment of love of his heavenly Father; but a servile fear is the cause of all his tears. The sovereign judge, who sounds the heart and judges not by appearances, is not to be imposed upon by such treacherous signs. He sees the root of his sinful passions still lurking in the bottom of his soul: he sees his heart still
voluptuous,

voluptuous, covetous, ambitious, revengeful; and that his repentance is only self-love and fear: *Esau* repented with bitter cries; but because it was only on the like motives, not for God, the Apostle assures us, *he found no place of repentance, although with tears he had sought it.* Heb. xii. 17.

We have in holy writ another more terrible instance of the hypocrisy of a death-bed repentance in *Antiochus the illustrious*, the wicked king of Syria, who had plundered the temple of the true God in *Jerusalem*, profaned the holy place, and persecuted God's servants. He was returning again to that city, resolved to make it a heap of stones: but suddenly struck by God, he falls into a filthy distemper, consumed by worms and excessive pains, and sees himself surrounded with the terrors of death. He now becomes, in appearance, the most perfect penitent. He humbles himself before God, sheds floods of tears, resolves to make the greatest amends possible for his crimes, to declare *Jerusalem* a free city, and grant the Jews the highest privileges equal to those of the *Athenians*; to adorn the holy temple in a royal magnificent manner, multiply its sacred vessels and furnish all the expences for sacrifices. He moreover promises to make himself a Jew, even become an Apostle of the true religion, and to walk over the whole earth to preach in person the power of God. Yet what does the Holy Ghost pronounce of this conversion, which would have canonized any sinner amongst men? *The wicked man prayed the Lord of whom he was not to obtain mercy.* 2 Mac. ix. 13. God saw his heart, and knew all this was only natural fear and self-love, or at least far short of the sincere disposition of true penitence. *It is only the impossibility of sinning which makes such a one depart from his sins. He who only leaves them at the sight of death, does not forsake them, but is forsaken by them,* says *Salvian of Marseilles*, l. 1. p. 348.

Third

Third Point.

Sincere repentance will appear extremely difficult and a rare miracle of an extraordinary grace in a dying sinner, if we consider the great obstacles it has then to encounter. Head-achs, pains, weakness both of body and mind, disturbance and uneasiness, grief at the separation from friends and the world with all its admired idols, which captivated the heart: sometimes also the hurry to settle temporal affairs, make the man almost incapable of any thing. Ah! it is a great deal for an habitual perfect virtue here to maintain itself. The sinner's inveterate sloth to all spiritual things, and his being unacquainted with the method of forming the necessary acts of virtue must be much increased under these difficulties. His old passions will still defend themselves obstinately in his heart, and even be stronger than ever, as the man will be then more incapable of using that violence which is necessary to weaken them. It is a mistake to imagine that passions, rooted in the soul by long habits, die of themselves in sickness, or at the sight of death. They may lie dormant for want of power, but they hold the heart as strongly as ever. *His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust. Job xx. 11.* Impiety, avarice, ambition, pride will still live in his heart. Such as he has lived, such he remains in his sickness, and such he dies. *Their end shall be according to their works. 2 Cor. xi. 12.* The rooting out of habitual passions, in the ordinary course of things, is not the work of one day, but requires a chain of vigorous endeavour, and such efforts, such earnest prayer, such violences as are not to be looked for commonly under a mortal sickness.

God forbid a death-bed repentance should be deemed impossible, and that any sinner brought thither should fall into despair. That of the good thief

thief on the cross was such. God by it has given sinners an example that no one need despair; but it is an only one, that no one might presume, says *St. Augustin*. And it is an example so singular in all its circumstances, that it can no ways regard the sinner who has long resisted the calls of God, and deferred his conversion by a pre-meditated design. An extraordinary miracle of grace may be granted to a sinner who has not lived in a continual abuse of grace; but can it be expected to be the happy lot of him who has, by a formed plot as it were of cheating God's justice in the end, made use of his mercy to insult his goodness. His threats of abandoning presumptuous sinners must certainly regard such as these in the first place. *I go away, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. John viii. 21. Then they shall invoke me: and I will not hear them. Prov. i. 28.*

If a true minister of God be called to assist such a dying sinner, what are his alarms, what is the confusion of his thoughts? The sinner may cry out to him with King Saul to Samuel: *I am in mortal anguish, and am straitened exceedingly on every side. "Coarctor nimis." Therefore I have called thee to shew me what I must do in the extremity in which I find myself. 1 Reg. xxviii. 15.* What answer would that faithful minister give him? Were he to speak his own just fears, might he not say with Samuel? *Why hast thou disturbed me to come hither? Why dost thou ask me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee?* "Quare inquietasti me ut suscitarer? Quid interrogas me, cum Dominus recesserit a te?" He dares not indeed put bounds to the infinite mercies and power of God. Therefore he suppresses his fears in his own breast, and performs all the duties of his ministry with all possible attention, but trembling lest the last sacraments be sacrileges, and only the seals of that unfortunate soul's reprobation; rather adoring in his heart the judgments of God,
who

who is terrible in his counsels above the sons of men, Ps. lxxv. 5. and the power of whose choler no man knows, Ps. lxxxix. 11. than comforting himself in the hopes of his mercies.

The sentiments of the Fathers are delivered to us by the author of the book on *Penance* long ascribed to *St. Ambrose*, but who was *Victor* of *Turonne*, a pious and learned African prelate of the fifth age. Thus he writes (*l. de pœnit. c. 18. t. 4. Op. St. Ambr.*) *If any one ask penance in his last sickness, and being reconciled departs this life: I own, we do not deny him what he desires, but I do not presume to say he departs well. I do not presume; I do not promise; I say nothing; I do not deceive or flatter you. The Christian that lives well, dies secure. He who does penance whilst in health, and after it lives well, is secure.—A man must renounce sin before penance, and whilst in health; he knows not whether in sickness he can receive penance, and confess his sins to God and the Priest. But doing penance at the last and being reconciled, I am not secure that he departs secure. I can give him penance, but can give him no assurance.—Do I say, he will be damned? No. But neither do I say he will be saved. Wouldst thou avoid what is uncertain? Do penance whilst thou art well. Then thou art secure, because thou couldst yet sin. But if thou dost penance, when thou canst not now sin, sins have forsaken thee, not thou them. Leave the uncertain, lay hold on the certain.*

MEDITATION IX.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

TO be deterred from embracing Christian perfection for fear of what the world will say, is a crime most injurious to God. 2. Most base in itself. 3. And an extreme folly.

First

First Point.

We owe, by the law of charity, a respect and regard to every neighbour; also a deference and complaisance in things indifferent or in such as are good: but then we owe to God the supreme duty and homage, which no regard to creatures must ever trespass against. Yet a desire to please men and gain their applause; or a fear of their raillery and displeasure often draws us into condescensions against our duty to God.

This is frequently a great obstacle, deterring souls from the practice of virtue. Every one has relations, friends and a neighbourhood. This forms a world in regard to him, with which he finds himself linked by the various engagements of a civil life. Upon the least change in his conduct, even in actions perfectly indifferent, or whether for better or worse, many of this world set themselves up as judges and censors, and make his person the common subject of their discourse, ordinarily to condemn him of levity, indiscretion, pride, hypocrisy or whatever their idle or malicious fancy suggests: and this especially in any change to piety which may seem a tacit reproach of their tepidity or licentiousness. The fear of such censures often affrights people from daring to undertake a perfect conversion or embrace a state of true virtue: and this is one of the great and most successful engines which the devil employs to make many of our resolutions of serving God abortive: and also to draw many into sin.

Now, nothing can be more injurious to God than this base cowardice of human respect. For it puts in opposite scales the infinite majesty of God and a vile world, and in the heart, though not in words, says thus to God: I would serve you, but I cannot break with the world, nor bear its jeers and censures, I would please you, if I could do it and not displease the world. Is not this positively to pre-

fer the world, and the least and basest part of the world, to God, in choosing rather to offend him than lose the false suffrages and senseless esteem of men!

It is the first and most essential law of religion, that we pay to God a love of preference infinitely above all creatures, and this all ways, speculatively, in outward profession, in actions, and in the real sentiments of the soul. Only to put him in competition with all creatures, would be an unparalleled affront. But here the basest, the most unjust, and most fickle of things is preferred to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, to our infinite benefactor and last end.

Every faithful servant of God says with the Apostle, that neither death, nor things present, or to come, shall ever separate him from the love of Christ. But here a petty human respect, the fear of a few impotent, senseless and impious tongues does what no tyrants or tortures, nor all the powers of the world or of hell ought ever to effect.

A traitor, who even to save his life has betrayed his prince or country, is justly the abomination of all mankind, even of those whom he serves by his perfidy. Much more must he be so, who renounces his allegiance to his God for the world, nay for the most empty and frail thing in the world. We abhor the very names of those wretches who apostatise from their faith for fear of torments; but are ourselves guilty of a greater baseness, if we are ashamed of God for much less than gibbets and death. Our indignation then ought to be turned against ourselves. Can we call ourselves brothers in faith of the martyrs, or even look up upon those generous soldiers of Christ? We are afraid of a look or a passing word which we apprehend will be spoke behind our backs; whereas they professed boldly their faith in the cross of Christ, when nothing was looked upon as more ignominious. They trembled not in the presence of the Lords of the

the universe threatening racks and fires: they feared not their disgrace nor that of whole kingdoms: they spilt their blood, as impious and mad, amidst the insults of their friends and the hissings of whole amphitheatres. All this ignominy of the world was their glory in the secrets of their hearts, because for Christ.

If we are not called to so great a trial from the world as the martyrs, we have all of us something to suffer from this sworn enemy of God's service. Never was one converted to God, who had not some threats of the world to despise. Had the *Magdalen* feared the scorn of the Pharisee's assembly, she had never been a saint: nor *David* a penitent if he had dreaded that of his whole kingdom. Of which he says: *I put on sackcloth, and was become the fable of the whole city.—I was the subject of the discourses and satires at every table. Ps. lxxviii. 12, 13. But I prayed to you, O Lord.* Not regarding the tongues of men, I was only solicitous to obtain your mercy.

Second Point.

But coward Christians sometimes invent a salvo. They say they will pray, fast and practise virtue in private, and only exteriorly conform to the world, to escape its ridicule. In this they condemn themselves: for is God and his service a thing to be ashamed of before the world? Is not he to be confessed and honoured publicly? Most certainly he is, as the very light of nature itself proclaims. We owe this to our neighbour's edification: we owe it to the sovereign honour of God, whose holy name and service we are always openly to profess, glory in, and to carry on our foreheads.

Christ will be ashamed of those before his heavenly Father, who are ashamed of him before men. *Luke ix. 26.* What a confusion will it be to a soul at the last day, and for eternity, to see her base human respect represented in its true colours before

God whom she so pusillanimously was ashamed of, before Christ in his glory, all the angels and heavenly courts, and all men and devils? What raileries and insults will she then receive from all creatures; even from them whom here she preferred to God! What mortal shame will she be overwhelmed with, nor able for one moment to hide her ignominious head from! How will she herself blush at, and not be able to look in the face, neither yet to turn her eyes from her most preposterous, unjust shame of what is the highest object of all glory.

How can you hope to satisfy those whose very composition is malice, who are never content with themselves, and who for the most part know not what they themselves would have. These are men who are enemies to reason and virtue, who will find something to condemn in all that you can do; and who, if you were to work miracles, would say they were impostures or enchantments, and call you a false and a designing man. If you are prudent and weigh well your actions and words, how can you please those who are foolish, light and indiscreet, and condemn before they understand. It is the misfortune of the wise that they are judged by the foolish, or ignorant and base, and who condemn whatever they do not understand at first sight. The world is full of foolish or envious persons. What will you do to please the latter, whose envy passes for zeal, and to whom passion seems reason, which it banishes.

This human respect is not only most injurious to God, but also a sentiment most base in itself. For what is this censure it so much dreads? What is this world it so much fears to displease? It is a few libertines, a light mob which judges without knowledge, reason, truth or virtue; and without any power to hurt us; without authority, right or justice. The world is so inconstant in its censures or applauses, that often in the same thing it changes as suddenly as the wind, and highly commends what
it

it just before condemned, of which the life of our Saviour on earth was a perpetual example. Its judgment even in temporal things is ever so uncertain, that they who most court it, are often the most severely condemned by it even in what they sought its approbation; as the heathens taught us by their fable of the man and his ass. It pronounces generally falsely, and against the rules of virtue and reason; and always rashly without sufficient knowledge, by passion, humour and caprice; out of pride, or to follow the torrent; especially when it censures virtue, as here it is exasperated to see its own vices condemned by the example of one who embraces a more regular conduct; which it therefore condemns in words, not to be obliged to imitate it; though at the same time, even they who thus decry and ridicule it by their tongues, usually admire and envy it in their hearts. For such is the beauty, amiableness and honour of virtue, that even the wicked cannot but highly esteem it, and own it as something greater than crowns and sceptres, and above the world. Even their storms against it seldom last long. Their malice and injustice is ordinarily overcome by its meekness and constancy, and by being contemned by it, its enemies at last become themselves its open applauders. They often will think it a happiness to treat with these persons, and find no more solid consolation than in their probity, prudence and fidelity; nor any secure shelter in their fears and necessities but in having recourse to them. Hence the Wise-man says of virtue; *Sap. viii. 10. I shall have glory with the multitude, and honour with princes;—I shall appear wonderful in the sight of the powerful;—and shall leave an eternal memory to those that shall be after me.* Such is this formidable enemy; nay it often is a mere phantom, subsisting only in the affrighted imagination of these timorous souls, and has no existence at all.

Besides

Besides this world has no power by its censure to hurt any servant of God, nor right to judge him. Ah! What can the cries of all the world do against us? We are like fearful beasts which start at shadows. Suppose the worst men can do, if we but please God, what need we matter their false judgment? If God justifies us, it matters not who condemns us; if God be with us, it is of no moment who be against us. Let us fear his sentence which is truth, and which is to decide our eternal lot: but as to men, let us never so much as consider what their verdict or opinion of our actions is, which is much less dangerous to us if it condemn than if it applaud them. Let then the world cry; it can only disturb the birds of the night which fear its phantoms; but cannot touch or scare one who is, in earnest, desirous to become a servant of God. *I regard not the being judged by you, or by man's day.*
1 Cor. iv. 3.

Again; as the world has no right to judge, it is a base slavery to subject the conduct of our lives to its extravagant caprice, even in ordinary actions and indifferent things. To regulate ourselves by its unsteady false rule in any thing whatsoever is intolerable. But it is most of all so, to enslave to it our conscience and virtue which, above all things, ought to be most free. To serve others in their temporal necessities and concerns, according to our circumstances and station in the world, is a point of charity, and sometimes of duty. But to subject ourselves to others, and bind ourselves to serve them in things essentially free, and which we owe to ourselves or others, and this out of cowardice to them, is a baseness not to be expressed. Our bodies indeed we may subject to others in bondage, if necessity require it: though a man born free, and of valour and spirit, would defend his corporal liberty with his life, rather than sell it for an unjust slavery. But our soul is above all things essentially

essentially free, and particularly so in the indispensable duties of religion, in the service of God, in the affair of eternity. In this the dignity of our nature and our allegiance to God forbid us to ever become slaves. As we owe this to God, to ourselves, and to the edification of every neighbour, it would be the greatest injustice, as well as the most shameful baseness. Much more is it so, to enslave this to a weak, inconstant, foolish world, nay to a frown or a word of one of its most contemptible members, as human respect doth. In every thing else we serve you, said the *Hebrews* to King *Pharoah*, when his slaves in Egypt; but we must be free to go into the wilderness to sacrifice to the God of *Israel*.

What are the noble sentiments which nature ingrafts in our hearts, and which religion infinitely raises and enhances, in this particular? How do we admire them in the saints; who on one side always boldly professed by their conduct, that they knew no other glory but what is placed in the service of God, and regarded it as the greatest mark of honour to suffer ignominy amongst men for it: on the other side, they scorned and pitied a wicked blind world. When faith in a God crucified was looked upon as a scandal and a folly both by Jews and Gentiles, and by all the great and wise ones of the world, *St. Paul* cried out, with a true generosity, in their fullest assemblies and before their tribunals; *I blush not at the gospel. Rom. i.* When all *Israel* adored the golden calves of *Jeroboam*, how did *Tobie* go constantly alone to *Jerusalem* to the temple of the Lord? Consider *Eleazar*, the *Maccabees*, *Susanna*, *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, all the saints and holy martyrs, how they generously despised threats, disgrace and the most ignominious persecutions. On the contrary, full of evangelical courage and liberty, they even regarded the raileries and censures of the world as their gain and
their

their glory; and justly scorned it. Even in temporal things and in the world, nothing is more glorious than to despise an unjust and foolish contempt. But raillery never is more frivolous, never more deserves contempt, than when it attacks virtue and the honour of God. For us therefore not to have the courage to despise it in what we ourselves judge it most deserves to be despised, and to sacrifice to it the very duties of our religion, our souls and the service of God, is a pusillanimity so base that it is impossible to find a name for it. We can certainly no more boast of a greatness of soul, if we once voluntarily pass under so shameful a yoke.

This baseness is the greater because it implies the most notorious injustice against God as well as ourselves. For God is the judge of our souls, and shall we have any true courage, if we dare not defend the interests of our God, and maintain what we owe him, especially against his declared enemy, and an antagonist the most despicable and impotent? Remember, my soul; I am not my own master; much less am I the world's. I have the honour to belong to God by all manner of titles; and I am inalienably his, and raised to a most eminent dignity in his family. I am his creature, formed by his hands, enriched with his gifts, redeemed by his blood, heir of his glory, and as a Christian, engaged by a solemn profession to fight his battles. Shall I yet, instead of arming myself with courage and defending his cause, abandon and betray him for a false and base world; which conduct would be unpardonable even in a mercenary.

As a Christian I am particularly obliged to despise the world. This I bound myself to by my baptismal vows, in which I solemnly renounced it. This the example of my divine master ought to encourage me to. He himself was hated and censured by the world, and foretold all his followers the like portion. *If the world hates you, know that it hated me first. John xv. 18.*

Third

Third Point.

This most base cowardice is likewise an extravagant folly. To call the judgment of others false and a madness, and yet to pay a deference to it so far as for it to be afraid of professing virtue, must be still a greater frenzy, and a more unaccountable contradiction to sense and reason. Would a wise man, if he were in the midst of sick or mad people, be ashamed of being in health or in his senses? If the world calls us fools we will answer that it is mad; and have truth itself, God and all his servants on our side when we say so. This folly will appear more notorious, if we consider that this world is not only a bedlam in its judgment on virtue, but also a *Babel* in which every one speaks a different language: and every one changes his judgment more easily than the wind veers about from one point of the compass to another, usually grounding it on passion or prejudice. Hence the proverb; He who would please every body will please nobody.

No prudent man will ever commit an affair of importance, even in temporal concerns, to a mob. It is a just thought of a great Wit, that it is a commendation to be that which a croud of fools call singular. There can hardly be a more severe thing said to a man in this age, than that he is like the rest of the world. What strange extravagance then must it be to regard such a judgment in the service of God, in which above all things, it is the most incompetent and unqualified court.

The folly of human respect appears more extraordinary, if we reflect that every Christian knows the world to be the declared enemy of God and of our souls; one who has declared war against us as we have against it. Virtue must ever displease it. Who then can regard its censure? Doth any one ask or follow the advice of an enemy?

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The world's censure is a great sign of Christ's approbation. A virtue applauded by it is justly to be suspected as not true or the work of God. Its praises of our generosity, courtesy or humility, give us reason to apprehend they were but human and false virtues; or at least expose us to the danger of losing their reward by a mixture of human motives creeping into them. The humiliation of its frowns purifies our heart and intention, and secures us the applause of heaven. *If I please men, I should not be a servant of Christ*, says the Apostle. *Gal. i. 10.* And Christ has forewarned us: *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. John xv. 20.* Thus our divine master himself was treated by it. He tells us, that if he had been of this world, it would have fought for him; but that as he came to declare war against it, in return it became his persecutor. Thus it is of all his true followers, as their lives are the condemnation of its vanity and corruption. It ought then to be our glory and our joy to find it declare itself our persecutor; and to court its approbation is a folly and a contradiction to the principles of our religion. It was thus the saints looked upon it: and this raised them above the dangers both of its vain disgrace and its false praises.

St. Paulinus, a noble Roman Senator, having renounced his dignity, honours and estate for Christ, leading an obscure austere life in solitude and extreme poverty, sometimes not having so much as a little salt to his legumes, rejoiced to hear the world bark at him, and all his own relations and friends conspire to tear him in pieces, and accuse his very retreat of melancholy, and a thousand sinister and false motives. His answer to all their calumnies and satires was, *It is an happy injury to displease you with Christ.* "O beata injuria, displicere cum Christo." (*ep. 29.*) As he was himself a great scholar

lar in every branch of polite literature, and an excellent poet, his old master, the famous poet *Ausonius*, regretted extremely his loss in the world; and in verses and letters yet extant, entirely in a worldly spirit, accused him, in the bitterest terms, of inexcusable madness and extravagance. The saint in his mild and beautiful answer, in elegant verse, tells him, it was his desire and pleasure to be persecuted, reviled and calumniated even by his friends; that all reproaches for Christ were most agreeable to him, and that he mattered not to pass for a fool in the judgment of men or the world, provided he could gain the approbation of his eternal King.

"Christi sub nomine probra placebunt."

Carm. 10. v. 186.

"Stultus diversa requirentibus esse,

Nil moror, æterno mea dum sententia Regi
Sit sapiens." *ib.* v. 265.

But even the world at length opened its eyes, and this saint's virtue became its admiration. His reputation drew men from the very corner of the empire only to see and converse with him in his poor cottage or cell, as *St. Augustin* and *St. Jerom* witness.

If any one should say; It is not the censure of the giddy mob, but that of persons of honour and virtue; or of worthy friends or parents which I fear: let them reflect that even this is no less despicable, if it oppose the interests of virtue. If they are really persons of great virtue and prudence, they will the sooner open their eyes and condemn their own unreasonable invectives. In the mean time, let *St. Jerom* be heard: he writes thus to *Heliodorus*, who was detained by his parents and family from engaging in a monastic life in the desert. *p.* 6. *t.* 4. *par.* 2. *Though your father hang on your neck; though your mother shew you her breasts,*

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with

with her hair dishevelled and her garments rent; though your father throw himself across the threshold: Walk over your father: fly with dry eyes to the standard of the cross. It is piety to be cruel in this. Elias, a novice under St. Bernard, to whose monastery he had fled from his parents, when they would force him out of his severe retreat he had just taken refuge in, writes to them in these words dictated by his master St. Bernard. In this I am not to obey you: in this I do not own you parents, but enemies. If you loved me you would rejoice, because I go to your and my common Father, the Parent of all. If any one come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters—he cannot be my disciple, says Christ, Luke xiv. 26. St. Bernard, ep. iii. p. 119.

It must be added, that this cursed human respect is again the most criminal, base and foolish, as, upon the most empty phantom, it makes all the means of salvation fruitless. This hindered the conversion of many at the preaching of our divine Redeemer. *Many of the chief men also believed in him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him.—For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God. John xii. 42, 43.* And thousands still continually are lost by the same stratagem. If a sinner is moved, if he forms good resolutions, this base senseless shame makes all abortive. He is afraid of putting them in execution, is afraid a greater regularity should appear in his manners, and he become the talk of the world, which is without mercy to all who partake it. Even at death this fear of men will still sway him: he is even then afraid of repentance, of restitution for injustices, calumnies and detractions, of reparation for injuries and contumelies. He loves the glory of men. We live indeed in an age where the profession of the gospel is honourable: otherwise would such souls even embrace faith itself? Ah! *I am saved, if I am not ashamed*

ashamed of my God, cries out *Tertullian*. “*Salvus sum si non confundar de Domino meo.*” O cursed foolish, base and impious shame, how many souls dost thou hold in infidelity, heresy and error? How many in sin, vanity and the slavery of the world? How many called by God to a state of perfection, or to an eminent practice of virtue, dost thou keep back and ruin? How many precious graces dost thou destroy, and convert into judgments? Ah! my soul, whenever the interest of God or virtue calls, never be so base as to listen to the world or a shameful fear of what it will say. This triumph over it will be a new subject of joy and glory, and an additional victory and crown; a second just agreeable sacrifice to thy God, whose will thou thus declarest, that thou lovest and seekest as thy only good. Never so far forget him as to raise imaginary fears in thyself about what men will say of thee. When they do really censure thee, rejoice hereat, hoping thou art then made a true disciple of thy divine master. Seek only the approbation of God, and glory from him at the last day, which will be holy, solid, great and eternal in the eyes of the whole universe. But it will be glorious even before men to despise the world, and to triumph over it for the sake of virtue, rather to lose our lives than to be guilty of the least known untruth.

MEDITATION X.

ON VENIAL SIN.

TO obtain a complete sense of the enormity of venial sin, let us, first, examine the judgment which Almighty God appears to pass upon it;— Secondly, Its pernicious effects upon the soul.

First Point.

Let us consider whether God regards venial sin as a small evil. His judgment of it cannot be false, as he is justice, equity and truth. He shews it to be a most enormous evil, seeing he punishes it with a terrible severity in his greatest friends and servants. *Moses*, that man of meekness, and a model frequently of all other virtues, above all men on earth; that man of miracles, appointed by heaven the God of *Pharaoh*, that is, invested with the power and authority of God over that haughty king, the greatest of the prophets, God's immediate ambassador both to his enemies and to his own people, and his interpreter by whose mouth he was pleased to give his law, and promulgate his greatest promises to men; that man again, who had undergone so many labours and dangers, and suffered so many contradictions and trials for God's honour and for his people: I say that eminent saint and great lawgiver, after all was excluded from the land of promise, in punishment of one venial sin. That he might see his people put in possession of that fruitful land, flowing with milk and honey, promised long before by God, to *Abraham* had been the object of his longing wishes, fatigues, projects, battles and earnest prayers, during forty years, all spent under the greatest hardships for that purpose. Yet God denies him that favour, and declares to him

him and Aaron; *Because you did not believe me to sanctify me before the children of Israel, you shall not lead these people into the land which I will give unto them.* Num. xx. 12. This distrust, for which God reproves him, seems to have been a doubt of a moment, whether he would work the miracle of producing a spring out of the rock, at his striking it, in favour of so rebellious and disobedient a people, as *St. Austin, qu. 19, in Num. St. Chrysostom, in Ps. 105. Theodoret, in Num. 20. &c.* gather from the text. Moses prayed most earnestly that God would forgive him that offence, and remit the punishment mentioned, as the mercy was a favour most dear to his heart. Yet he would not be moved to mitigate his sentence, either by his fears, or for the sake of his past zealous labours and virtues. Lord God, said Moses to him—*I will pass and see this very good land, and that rich mountain. And the Lord was angry with me on your account, and did not hear me, and said—Thou shalt not pass that Jordan.* Deut. iii. 24, 25.

Oza seeing the holy ark, as it was drawn by the cattle, lean on one side, touched it with his hand, to support it: for which he was suddenly struck dead; *Reg. vi. 7.* because it was, out of reverence, forbidden for any except priests to touch it: tho', according to *Josephus*, Oza himself was a Levite, not a simple layman. King David, in punishment of a little vanity and curiosity in numbering his people, saw 70,000 of them swept off by a pestilence. *2 Reg. xxiv. 15.* Lot's wife was, upon the spot, turned into a pillar of salt, for looking back to see Sodom, her country, in flames. *Gen. xix. 16.* The holy king *Ezechias*, shewed his treasures with a little vanity to the ambassadors of *Baladan* the King of *Babylon*; and straight the prophet *Isaias* came to denounce to him from God, that, in punishment thereof, all these riches should be carried away into *Babylon*, his nobles and people led captives, and his

his sons made eunuchs and slaves in the King of *Babylon's* palace, 4 *Reg.* xx. 17. *Isa.* xxxix. We read in the third book of Kings, *ch.* xiii. that a certain prophet was sent by God to *Bethel* in *Samaria*, to curse King *Jeroboam's* idolatrous altar. He boldly exposed himself to martyrdom, and executed his commission, and when *Jeroboam's* hand, which he had stretched out to command him to be apprehended, was withered, he restored it again by a miracle. Having refused to eat with that King, or receive any present from him, and obeyed God's orders in every thing, with the danger of his life, returning home, he was deceived by a false prophet into a small undesigned transgression, in being prevailed upon to eat with him. In punishment of this, he was killed by a lion, on his road; yet the beast touched not his body, but stood by and guarded it. God would thus chastise his sin, to deter others from the smallest offences; but caused the lion to guard his corpse, to shew us his sin was venial, and expiated by his death, as is observed by the fathers and interpreters. *St. Augustin, l. de curâ pro mort. c. 7. St. Gregory the Great, Dial. l. 4. c. 24. Theodoret. ib. S. Eucherius, &c.*

But why do we seek so remote examples of the severity with which God punishes venial sin, seeing we might discover it in the miseries we ourselves suffer, did we behold the causes of them all. When we groan under them, how bitter are our tears and complaints? What would not we give to remove them? Alas! we should do better to learn in them the malice of sin, to consider their cause only, mount up to their source, and to repent of and avoid all sin: for the most heavy temporal afflictions may be the just punishment only of venial sin.

But the punishments of sin in this life are light, and inflicted in mercy, that being borne and sanctified by patience, they may expiate our sins at a cheaper

cheaper rate, and prevent the heavier pains of purgatory. Could our eyes penetrate into those dungeons, we should there truly see how grievous an evil one venial sin is, which deserves such intolerable torments. We should there see souls, which had lived faithful to God, and had done and suffered very much for his honour; souls even now adorned with his sanctifying graces, and all the other gifts and privileges of his infinite love; souls even now loving him above all things, and accepting these his scourges with patience, resignation, and love, both of him and of his severe justice: reciprocally also loved infinitely by him as his most dear spouses, children and declared heirs, yet suffering more than the most cruel knives or fires could inflict, or the most inhuman tyrants invent; more than any tongue can express or heart conceive; and all this only for one venial sin. Oh! How grievous an evil must it be! God shuts heaven's gates against his dearest and most faithful servants, if infected in the least with it, and inflicts on them the most inconceivable torments. *That fire, though not eternal, is wonderfully grievous, and exceeds all pains which any ever suffered in this life, says St. Austin, l. de cur. pro mort. c. 8. and St. Cæsarius, hom. 8. It is greater than any pain in this world can be felt or imagined.*

Second Point.

We shall farther discover the evil of venial sin, if we consider its most pernicious effects; for it deprives a soul of very great good, and many advantages, brings her much mischief, and leads her still into more terrible evils. *First*, It robs her of much good; for as it spots and defiles her spiritual beauty, it makes her less agreeable to God, and renders all her actions and virtues less pleasing in his sight. *As any thing that is touched by one defiled, will be itself defiled; so that people before my face, says the* Lord,

Lord, and so all the work of their hands, and all things which they have offered there, shall be defiled. *Aggæus xi. 15.* Also, as venial sin darkens the purity and cleanness of the soul, it disturbs and diminishes her inward happiness, peace, and tranquillity. Again, it is an obstacle to the consolations and other gifts of the Holy Ghost, who, often for venial sin, leaves a soul dry in prayer, without sentiment in the divine praises, and in approaching the sacraments, without compunction in the meditation of spiritual truths, without any relish of heavenly consolation. The divine Spirit seeing the heart tainted with sin, withdraws with his special gifts; and in our spiritual aridities, if we could mount up to the source, we should often find it this evil. *Our sins cause the separation between us and God. Isa. lix. 2.*

Venial sin likewise retards the soul's progress to perfection. They are as so many clouds between the soul and the divine light, which can only enter a soul in proportion as she is more empty and free from them. Whence the spouse always repeats with deep sentiments of compunction, *Cant. xi. 15. Catch for us the little foxes which destroy the vineyards; for our vineyard is blossomed.* Our soul has flowered with holy desires; already some buds and fruit appear, and give hopes of a plentiful vintage. Let us destroy the little foxes which will otherwise ruin it, and blast all our rising hopes.

Venial sin deprives a soul of God's extraordinary graces, and very much diminishes his ordinary ones. He is liberal in the effusion of his graces, but to those only who bring faithful and generous hearts. Any infidelity shuts his bountiful hand, and nothing so much invites his goodness as an exact fidelity. This is truly the work of perfect love, to be faithful in the minutest points. *What is little, is little: but it is very great to be faithful in the least things;* says *St. Aug. l. de doct. christ. c. 18.* Thus this evil deprives a soul of much good.

Venial

Venial sin also brings great detriment and mischief to a soul. Though it destroys not habitual charity entirely in her, yet impairs it. Did we know, as the blessed, or as the souls in purgatory now do, how incomparably precious, how inestimable every degree of sanctifying grace is, we should look upon the least loss or diminution in it as an extreme evil. Again, venial sin is an indisposition and a wound of the soul, though not such as to cause immediate death. Do we reason thus of the body! It is but a passing curable illness; so not to be avoided. It is but a wound in the arm or leg; it is but the loss of an hand or eye, and will not be my death. Or is not a spiritual wound of the soul much more to be dreaded than any in the body, or even its death many times over? *St. Teresa* inculcated this most earnestly. She writes thus to her dear Nuns: *l. de concept. divin. am. c. 2.* Take notice of one thing, and always remember it for my sake. If you are pricked but with a pin, will you not feel it? Or with a thorn, though it be never so small? Will not then the soul feel the least transgression?

Especially if these transgressions be multiplied, they strangely weaken and disfigure the poor soul, covering her quite with heaps of sores, ulcers, and hideous deformities. Hence *St. Casarius*, *hom. 50.* inter op. *St. Aug.* Though they do not give mortal wounds, like murder, yet all united together, as an universal spreading sore, so disfigure the beauty of the spouse, as to separate her from the chaste embraces of her heavenly bridegroom, who is spotless and beautiful above the sons of men; unless they be cut off and healed by daily penance. We must also observe with *St. Gregory Nazianzen*, *Serm. 7.* That if the spots upon richer and more shining garments appear worse, those which defile a spiritual soul, beautified by God, must be most ugly and terrible. Add, the more filthy the ordure is, the nastier and the worse will the stain be. But nothing can be more so than base earthly affections

fections upon an incorporeal soul. Such evils are these that only the blood of Christ can wash out the least.

Venial sins moreover, like little wounds, weaken the soul, and are a load hindering her from rising to heavenly things, making her heavy, tepid and slothful to virtue or good works. They are so many clouds obscuring the light of spiritual truths: so many loads weighing her down from soaring high towards God: so many chains binding the hands and impeding the free practice of good works. The motion of a clock is often stopt by a little dust in one wheel. A little bird-lime will clog the wings of the bird, or one small thread of a net hamper her so that she will fall a prey to the fowler.

Again, every venial sin retards a soul from the possession of heaven after death. It is a debt which must be acquitted to the last farthing. By multiplying such transgressions, how do we increase the enormous schedule of our debts to God, which must be all paid, and the divine justice entirely satisfied. God puts down all in his great accounting book. He keeps an exact register of all our distractions, idle looks, vain desires, unprofitable thoughts or words; of all our least omissions, neglects and infidelities. *St. Aicard* is said, in his life, 15 *Sept.* to have seen the devil count every hair of his head, which he cut off out of the regular time of his monastery allotted for that action. And *St. Gertrude* to have seen him putting together all the syllables in her Office, which she had not pronounced distinctly.

If venial sin be terrible, on account of the evils it causes, it is far more so if we consider those much greater ones to which it leads a soul. It disposes to mortal sin, and what is worse, to a state of slothfulness and insensibility under it; and this many ways. On one side, it weakens charity, the spiri-
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tual life of the soul, and impairs her strength, as little repeated corporal sicknesses long hanging on, do that of the body. It deprives her also of God's special protection, by which he wards off dangers, or grants extraordinary succours under them. It makes the succours of his actual graces more sparing; for those he bestows in proportion to our good use of them, and withdraws them in punishment of the least infidelities. On the other side, it fills the heart daily more and more with creatures, and fetters it with earthly attachments; it strengthens concupiscence and self love, with the whole brood of its passions, which, by insensible degrees, grow furious and masterless. Hence the law of God seems a painful yoke, and the unction of the Holy Ghost is banished. In this situation, the spiritual life of the soul must be very languishing, and can never support itself long. Still the wounds are repeated, till it be quite lost. As the carpenter's repeated blows drive in the wedge farther every time till the block is at last split: as a little chink neglected, will sink the largest vessel; as a spark undiscovered, and not put out, will raise a dreadful fire; as one drop of blood in a human body extravasated in the lungs, and not expectorated, will ulcerate the organ, and at last cause death; so in the spiritual life, venial sin multiplied, and not wiped away, leads to the most fatal death. All the greatest falls have small beginnings. No man becomes very wicked on a sudden. Lesser commencements pave the road first, and the greater these have been, the more desperate is the precipice to which they lead.

Not only grace is withdrawn, and the passions strengthened; but also the supports and pillars of a virtuous life are ruined, by reiterated venial sins. How then can it stand? The strongest edifice must fall, if its pillars are taken away. The commonwealth subsists by its laws. These are the supports
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of its discipline, peace and good order: and if they grow into contempt, or begin to be trampled upon, the state must fall, and become a company of highway-men, and a Babel of lawless confusion. Hence *Aristotle* observes, (*Politic. l. 5.*) that the first thing to make a republic flourish, and long maintain itself is, that its laws be exactly observed. The rules or constitutions are the same to a Religious House. A facility of transgressing the smallest is apt to creep in, under various pretences; and this, if it once gets footing, is sure very soon to ruin the best discipline and most flourishing House, and become the bane of all good in it. Therefore, every well governed monastery is extremely solicitous, that none of its rules be contemned or habitually neglected, be they never so small or seemingly trivial. Good purposes, and the exercise of virtue are, in the same manner, the means by which piety maintains itself. If relaxation be once admitted amongst them, it will infallibly gain apace, and the fabrick soon fall. Nothing then is more important than to avoid all habitual transgressions of the smallest duties, for such sap the very foundations of a virtuous life, as small extravagant expences, if daily multiplied, will ruin any estate. The Holy Ghost therefore gives this advice: *Keep the law as the apple of thy eye; Prov. vii. 2.* How severely is military discipline observed in an army? The necessity is still greater in our spiritual warfare.

But what need of reasonings, or of appealing to universal experience, to evince what the oracle of truth itself expressly declares in those words: *Eccl. xix. 1. He who contemns small things, falls by degrees.* *St. Austin* compares venial sins to small venomous insects, which, though they do not kill by one bite, as the lion, yet by multitudes are as effectually mortal in the end. *l. de 10 cordis, c. 11.* And in his *12th Tract on St. John, n. 14. p. 390.* he writes thus: *Many little sins, if they are neglected, kill,*

kill. The drops of water which fill rivers, are small; grains of sand are also small: yet, if much sand be laid on a ship, it sinks it; and if water, entering by little, be not pumped out, it is no less sure to drown the vessel, than the greatest waves falling upon her. It matters not whether she perish all at once, by one great wave or by degrees, by springing a leak unperceived, or by water entering drop by drop, through an imperceptible chink. The wreck is neither less sure nor less fatal. This doctrine is not to be understood as if venial sins, ever so much multiplied, can amount to the guilt of mortal sin. What then is here meant is, that venial sin neglected, certainly leads to mortal, and even to the most dangerous state of mortal sin.

A neglect of venial sin disposes to mortal two ways, directly and indirectly. Directly, first, because it often happens that a considerable matter in the same line will be mortal. In such cases it is evident, that an habit of smaller transgressions leads to greater; as if one be accustomed to use rash words, to commit little frauds, tell inconsiderable lies, be negligent a little in his devotions or other duties to God, or the like; if this be with attachment, or habitual and affected, it will, by degrees, carry him beyond the bounds of venial sin, because they, of their own nature, draw a soul farther and farther, and at the same time, both blind and with a violence natural to all habits, attract her. Secondly, The just bounds of mortal and venial sins are generally uncertain to us, and cannot be fixed by men, or determined by any human judgment or learning, as God has no where revealed them to us; as such a knowledge is no ways necessary for us, seeing all sin is to be avoided with the utmost diligence. Hence *St. Augustin*, speaking of the distinction of mortal and venial sin, says, *l. 21. de liv. c. 27.* *It is a point most difficult to find, and most dangerous to determine.* "Difficillimum
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est invenire, & periculosissimum definire." He adds: *I have made great search, but have not been able to find any certainty; and perhaps God has, on that very account, concealed them, lest our solicitude in avoiding all sin, should grow remiss; because if men knew such limits, their sloth might lie secure: whereas, the bounds of venial sin not being known, we have a great spur to be always fervent and watchful.* St. Thomas also observes: *It is too dangerous for us to determine what is not mortal sin, unless the truth be evident in God's word. Quodlib. 9. Art. 15.*

We must, thirdly, observe, that men ordinarily fall short of their resolutions. The very best do not perfectly reach their aim. How much more will the slothful, and they who only propose to avoid mortal sin, exceed these bounds?

Fourthly, Such are always blinded by their passions, consequently are, of all men, the least able to fix these bounds between mortal sin and venial sin. Custom, example, and false maxims of the world, make men often look on great crimes as small. Self-love, especially in the tepid, is still a greater bias, strongly actuates the will, and disfigures the truth. Our sins, on this account, seem to us not great, because by self-love, shutting our eyes, we flatter ourselves in our own deceit, says St. Gregory the Great, l. 1. in Ezeth.

But though the object can only be a venial sin, it will be made mortal, if our hearts (whose dispositions we can never sound) are so bent on it, that we should commit it, though it were mortal. The sovereign love of God is weakened by degrees, by venial sin, and at last will be extinguished in the heart, whilst an attachment to creatures, growing continually stronger, at last gains the ascendant, and becomes predominant in it. Thus every habitual venial sin disposes directly to mortal, as St. Thomas observes, several ways. The soul from it slides into the precipice, often without being conscious to her-
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self of her fall; or at least being led to the brink, abandoned by God, hurried on by the violence of impetuous passions, she knowingly takes the fatal step.

As for a design in venial sin of venturing to the bounds of mortal, or a resolution of laying aside all solicitude of avoiding any sin which is not mortal; either of these dispositions is, in itself, an actual mortal sin, as it is an immediate occasion of it. *He who loves danger shall perish in it.*

Venial sin also always disposes to mortal sin indirectly, as it impairs charity daily more and more, makes graces more sparing and weaker, destroys fervour, roots up good dispositions, strengthens the passions, and opens the heart to receive the poison. And such a state of venial sin is the more desperate, as in it the strength of the soul has been gradually enervated, and she is reduced into it by an universal spiritual decay. Corporal distempers are much more dangerous and harder to be cured, when they proceed from a decay, and are the effect of a long languishing and waste; for powers, spirits or organs, spent and exhausted, cannot be repaired again, whereas disorders from a plethora or redundancy are easily removed by evacuations. So it happens in the disorders of the soul. Hence *St. Gregory the Great* says, *Pastor Admon. 34. Sometimes it is worse to sin in a small thing than in a greater.* And *St. Chrysostom, hom. 8. in Matt. Sometimes small sins seem to me to require more care to be avoided than the more grievous; for these, of their own nature, stir up our attention against them, whereas the others are more easily despised.* Nothing is destroyed all at once. A great fall rises from little things every where; but especially in a spiritual life. Whence *St. Chrysostom* says again, *Hom. 8. in 1 Cor. He who strays a little, will go far very fast. A little is not little; it is all.* Souls do not fall all at once. The devil never proposes enormous sins at first. Their slight affrights, as they are monsters of horror,

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bringing with them the guilt of hell. He finds access more easily by venial sins, which, becoming habitual, lead to mortal insensibly. *He who is unfaithful in little, is unfaithful also in much. Luke xvi. 10.* For, as *St. Augustin* observes, *Enchir. c. 78.* What sins are light, what grievous, is to be weighed by the judgment of God, not of men: for, who would have believed him guilty of hell-fire who calls his brother fool, if truth itself had not said it. He moreover takes notice that, men judge under the blinds of false prejudices, of passions, and of the world, and its maxims and customs. *Enchir. c. 80.* Sins never so great and horrible, when once they are come into a custom, are believed small, or sometimes none at all. The most common and lightest venial sins, directly lead the soul to mortal, which are as seldom perceived or thought on, as the danger was. Thus, talkativeness leads naturally to detraction, slander, and a hundred excesses in which the malice may be mortal, yet entirely unperceived. Too great a familiarity, even of persons of the same sexes, leads into sensual fondnesses, or criminal flatteries and condescensions: curiosity draws into dissipation, hardness of heart and innumerable evils: a little vanity into open pride or ambition: and so in all other habitual venial sins. On the contrary, he who fears an idle word, will never fall into detraction, &c. as he who is careful not to throw away a shilling superfluously, is in no danger of spending his estate.

MEDITATION XI.

ON VENIAL SINS OF SURPRISE.

1. **T**HE distinction of venial sins of malice and of surprise is very great.

2. No one is exempt from sin.

3. On the means by which daily venial sins are repaired.

First Point.

1. Infinite is the difference between venial sins of malice, that is, those which are committed knowingly, and with a positive deliberate malice and full choice; and such sins of surprise, which men fall into, through human frailty, for want of sufficient compunction, from which even the Saints are not totally exempt, who would not, for a thousand worlds, consent knowingly to the least offence of God. The latter are neither so grievous nor so pernicious. Hence the Holy Ghost says; Not, He who falls into small faults; but, *He who despises small things, falls by degrees. Eccl. xix. 1.* For he who neglects or contemns them, commits them with a perfect knowledge, and a deliberate malice, never rises from them, but lives in an habitual impenitence of them, so that his wounds are deep, permanent and incurable, and multiplied one upon another. Such a disposition and state is most hateful to God, and most pernicious in its consequences. Upon which *St. Bernard* writes thus; *l. de præc. & disp. c. 11. The obstinacy of an impenitent heart makes, even the least faults, exceedingly grievous, and turns a small simple transgression into a crime of heinous rebellion.* And *St. Chrysostom, Hom. 8. in 1 Cor. Let us not neglect any sloth as small: for neglected, it will grow immense. A little rent in a garment, if neglected, will destroy the whole coat, and the*

house will fall, from a few stones failing, and not repaired. Have not I been guilty of this insensibility?

2. Venial sins of surprise and frailty are of a very different nature. They are such as the servants of God fall into, though they study daily to be more watchful against them, and labour in perpetual spirit of penance, to wash away their stains as soon as contracted. Such are light distractions in spiritual duties, through the inconstancy and weakness of human minds, anxiety in duties or affairs, too great levity in hearing others faults, too great harshness, severity, or frowardness in zeal, precipitation, or a little sloth in actions, small unperceived motions of self-love, sensuality, vanity, self-will, or the like—secret passions, superfluous words, want of a sufficient guard over any of the senses, or any motives of the heart, &c. Any deliberate action, word, thought or affection, which is not virtually referred to the holy will of God, and corresponds not with it, or tainted with any such circumstance from self-love, is an offence of God. Simple imperfections indeed, are not sins, but only a want of a greater perfection; yet they are frequently sins, on account of some sloth or other passion being the occasion of them. And it is impossible often, for men to determine what is a venial sin, and what a mere imperfection; or to discern all the movements of their own heart, or what is their real principle.

3. In proportion as a soul advances in virtue, her light of grace increases; and as it becomes purer, the more perfectly does she discover in herself, the secret movements of depraved nature and self-love. She sees them in great numbers, like filthy serpents, full of poison, creeping out of her heart, such as she could not have believed that she had harboured in her bosom. She abhors them and their cursed source: yet does not fret or disturb herself at the sight of her weakness and baseness

ness, but only learns thence to humble herself more and more, to detest that source of pride, vanity, and self-love still subsisting within her, and to labour courageously to extirpate it.

As the sun, from its rising, mounts higher and higher, displaying brighter beams, so her interior light, still growing continually greater, assists her in discerning and demolishing more perfectly, the tower of self-love, on which all the batteries of all the passions are lodged, and which runs its foundations very deep in vitiated nature, is the object of our perpetual assaults, and can never be entirely destroyed during this mortal life. We must observe also, that the more perfect a soul is, the more grievous is the least sinful offence. The sin increases according to the degree of merits, *St. Isidore, l. 21. de sum. bono, c. 18.* Whence *St. Gregory, &c.* shews how enormous the least offence is in a priest, if he in any thing deserts wilfully the war of which he is a leader and head.

4. Both faith and reason teach us, that it is in our power to avoid every particular venial sin: otherwise the committing of it would not be a free action, nor consequently any fault; as *St. Augustin* says, *l. 2. de prec. in prit. c. 8.*

But it is an article of this same holy faith, that no one lives entirely exempt from all venial sin, unless by an extraordinary succour of grace, as we believe of the blessed Virgin, who, by a special privilege was, as *St. Augustin* doubts not, *l. de nat. et Gr. c. 36. &c.* preserved from all kind of sin: nor will the respect we owe to her divine Son, suffer us to call this in question, says the same Father; and in his words also, the Council of *Trent, Sess. 6. Can. 22.*

This is a point most clearly expressed in the holy scriptures. *There is not a man who doth not sin.* 3 Reg. viii. 46. *We all offend in many things.* Jac. iii. 2. *The just man falls seven times a day, i. e. often.* Prov. xxiv. 16. *If we say that we have not sin, we seduce*

seduce ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 Joan. i. 8. He says not, we have not humility, if we say that, but we deceive ourselves, and say what is false. This our blessed Redeemer sufficiently teaches us in his divine prayer, in which all the just learn to pray continually for the forgiveness of their daily sins, which would not be true in every one's mouth, if every one did not often sin, as *St. Augustin* in many places, *St. Cyprian*, *St. Ambrose*, *St. Gregory*, *St. Thomas*, &c. observe.

5. The Semipelagian pride, denied the just fell into frequent venial sins. This heresy was condemned in the Council of *Mileve*, *can. 7.* and strenuously confuted by the great Doctor of God's grace *St. Augustin*, in his several books against those enemies of the necessity of Christ's grace. Also by *St. Jerome*, *l. 2. contra Pelag.* & *l. 2. contra Jovinian*, and all the subsequent Fathers and Councils. Whence even *Cassian*, though in another point too much leaning to the Semipelagian error, not then condemned, writes thus: *It is impossible for any of the saints not to incur some of these offences which are committed by words, by thought, by ignorance, by forgetfulness, by a kind of necessity, by surprise, by sloth, or drowsiness.* And *St. Augustin l. de Nat. & Gr. c. 36.* If therefore, excepting the *Virgin Mother of God*, we could assemble together all the saints whilst they lived here on earth, and ask them if they were without sin; all would cry out with one voice: *If we say that we have not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* *St. Gregory the Great, l. 4. mor. c. 24.* observes, that in the book of *Job*, stars are said to be darkened with clouds, to signify that souls, even in the saints, drag still certain remains of night in this life.

6. We have reason to adore and bless the mercy of God in bearing with us, so weak and sinful as we are, and in suffering us to live to serve him, at least in something, and to wash away our offences by continual tears and penance. We ought still more to praise

praise his mercy in vouchsafing at last to call us, by death, from this life of sin, that we may cease to sin, and put off all our stains, being translated from this state of banishment and danger, into the country of sanctity and pure love. Do not we sigh after that blessed region? Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly speedily from this land of sin, danger and vanity, and enjoy the true freedom of the blessed? In the mean time, continual watchfulness over myself, humility, prayer and penance must be my arms and protection. How faithful ought I to be in the perfect and heroic practice of all these means of my preservation?

Third Point.

7. These venial sins of surprise, as they proceed, not from malice, but from a bare want of a continual universal watchfulness, are easily blotted out in the just, who live in a perpetual spirit of penance, which these falls nourish in them, and excite them daily to serve God more perfectly. But if they are not thus speedily and carefully washed off, they multiply their wounds, and have most dangerous consequences in the soul. They produce a subtraction of the operations of the Holy Ghost, and of his particular graces; impair charity, weaken its fervour, create a languishing in the soul, a difficulty to be recollected, a coldness in prayer, and pave the way to still more pernicious remote effects. The least sore in the body, if neglected and left uncleansed to corrupt with dirt and filth, with which it will be soon filled, will fester, and become very painful, nay, at length, will mortify; and if still nothing be done to stop it, will, by a fatal gangrene, cause death. In like manner, the least venial sins, which would be easily wiped away by daily penance, will, by neglect, *over-run the whole soul with blotches, and an universal scab, so that she cannot come to the embraces of her heavenly spouse, at least without great confusion.*

confusion. St. Aug. They will, moreover, putrify, as it were, and come to that pitch as at last to threaten her spiritual life, and taint and infect all her virtues and good works. The Holy Ghost compares them to flies which spoil the sweetest ointment, by putrifying in it, *Flies dying in the oil corrupt its sweetness. Eccles. x. 1.*

8. The saints are most sensible of the pernicious consequences, and of the venom of this evil. Therefore they labour with the utmost solicitude to preserve the greatest purity of soul, that nothing in it may offend the eyes of their jealous and holy God, alienate him any way from them, or deprive them of any of his choicest favours. By the least falls, they learn to be daily more watchful, and to have a more strict guard over themselves; thus they advance daily in greater purity of life and manners. To efface immediately all debts they may contract, and to speedily heal all little wounds which they receive, they never cease weeping and labouring to satisfy for them, by earnest humble prayer; a constant spirit of compunction and all good works, performed in a contrite and humble heart. They, above all, repeat with all possible fervour, that petition of our Lord's prayer for this purpose: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*, which they have frequently in the day, in their hearts and mouths. Thus lamenting the sins which they discover in themselves, and also those they do not see, knowing their hidden offences to be many, they say with *St. Gregory Nazianzen, Carm. de seipso*, *I pour forth scalding tears; yet I add new sins; and though I should have exhausted my tears by fresh sins, I still produce new sources of tears.*

The principal works of satisfaction, by which these offences are to be expiated, are these three; prayer, alms-deeds and fasting, or all bodily mortification. But care must be taken, that inward compunction, or a perfect spirit of penance, accompany them, and be their soul.

These sins, says St. Cæsarius

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rius, *Hom. 8.* must be continually redeemed by perpetual prayers, frequent fasts, large alms, and the forgiveness of others offences against us. And *St. Leo, Serm. 10. de jejun. 10. menis.* To heal the wounds which they frequently receive who are engaged in this conflict with our spiritual enemy, the salve of three medicines is chiefly to be employed, fervent prayer, the mortification of fasting, and charity by plentiful alms. *St. Augustin, ep. ad Seleucian,* calls our Lord's prayer in particular, the daily penance of the good christians. He also says, *Hom. ult. inter 50.* Our lesser sins separate us from the embraces of our spouse, unless they are cut off by daily penance. To blot out which, we every day strike our breasts, and acknowledge ourselves sinners.

9. The sacraments of penance and the blessed eucharist, and the sacrifice of the Mass, which is offered for the remission of sins, are the most powerful remedies of venial sin. That of penance was expressly instituted by Christ, for the remission of all sin, and nothing can contribute more to purify our souls than the devout use of it. It is particularly suitable before the holy communion, which requires the greatest purity from all stain that is possible. The sacrament of the blessed eucharist is the restorer of our impaired spiritual strength, and the antidote, by which we are delivered from our daily faults, and preserved from mortal sins, as the Council of Trent explains its effects. *Sess. 13. c. 2.* Whence *St. Ambrose* says, *l. 2. de sacr. c. 6.* I, who am always sick, ought always to take my physic. On the Mass, he observes in the same place. *If, as often as the blood of Christ is poured forth, it is spilt for the remission of sins, that my sins may be always forgiven me; I who sin always, ought always to use the remedy.* This holy sacrifice is then always to be assisted at in the most perfect spirit of penance, as it is the great means of satisfaction and propitiation.

Praying in holy places, striking our breasts, benedictions of the church, and the devout use of holy water, contribute to blot out venial sins, through the public prayers and blessing of the church, but only if they are accompanied with the inward true spirit of compunction and penance. Therefore, when we take the holy water, for example, we must be very solicitous that we do it with these sincere sentiments and affections, praying in our hearts: *Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, not dipped in the blood of sacrifices or goats, the weak offerings of the old law, but in the blood of the immaculate Lamb, the true propitiation of our offences, may it cleanse perfectly my soul, and it will be pure in thy holy eyes.* For prayer and all these other means have no power or effect, but through the blood of Christ, the only source of grace and propitiation.

Besides watching over ourselves, we may imitate *St. Charles Borromeo*, who begged his director, and also a faithful director, to daily advertise him of the least faults they should observe in him. Only this vigilancy and fear can discover and remove the beginnings of our evils, which otherwise, like imperceptible vapours rising out of the earth, soon form great clouds. The maxim usually given for the preservation of bodily health, oppose the beginnings, is still more necessary in our salvation.

We must, by self-examination, discover our most secret faults; must pierce into the most inward recesses of the mind, strip off every disguise, lay open the inward part, make a strict scrutiny into the very soul and spirit, and critically judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. *James i. 23.* This we must do with an impartial severity, sensible how apt our heart is to deceive us, and how treacherous and deceitful it is. And its wiles and doublings are so hidden and intricate, that it requires the nicest care and most steady attention, to detect and unfold them.

MEDITATION XII.

ON HABITUAL SIN.

1. **A** Criminal habit not broke, aggravates the malice of every sin committed by it, and requires immediate repentance.
2. It is very difficult to be overcome.
3. It is easily formed, and increases its strength by the quickest, though most imperceptible progress.

First Point.

1. A habit is a facility or propension produced by repeated acts; For example: A man, by often swearing, acquires an unhappy proneness to that vice. Such a propensity may indeed be sometimes created by one act, if it be a very intense one.

Divines teach, with *St. Thomas of Aquin*, that sin is more grievous by the circumstance, if it be a sin of habit. *First*, Because the will adheres to it, and embraces it with far greater eagerness, vehemency and obstinacy, than in sins of frailty and surprise. The choice of them is also more deliberate, at least in the cause, which is the habit.

Secondly, The habit is a most lasting and fixed resolution of preferring the offence and enmity of God to his service, which is also imbibed by every act produced by the habit: as on the contrary a vow or constant resolution of any perpetual virtuous practice, adds to the very act, the merit and value of such a perpetual sacrifice. On these accounts *St. Thomas* teaches that sins of habit are sins of mere malice, and the most voluntary of all others. But this is to be understood of a habit still subsisting entire; for after the will has sincerely broken it, and labours to root it out, if it should yet be car-

ried by its violence into some sin, this will be deemed no longer an act of malice, but of frailty.

Thirdly, We must add that every habit is, by its own nature, an immediate occasion of sin, and an interior one which cannot be avoided by flight, consequently it is the worst of all occasions. As then, for a man voluntarily to expose himself to any immediate occasion of mortal sin, is always a mortal sin, it must be such wilfully to create or fortify any vicious habit, the most dangerous of all occasions, and such a one as the man must always carry about with him and in his own bosom. Hence, the circumstance of a habit in a mortal sin, is to be declared in confession. Which, indeed, it ought to be, were it only to make known the true state of the penitent's soul, in order to receive proper advice and a suitable penance, though often this circumstance will be sufficiently known from the confession itself. This proposition is condemned by Pope *Innocent XI. u. 58. We are not bound to confess the custom of any sin to the confessor who asks it.*

2. Yet sinners sometimes alledge the violence of their attachment to their passions, and the difficulty they find in overcoming their vicious habits, as an excuse of their crimes and delays of repentance. This is certainly the height of impiety and of obstinacy in evil. For, to call the victory over their passions impossible, is, on one side, tacitly to accuse God, as if he granted not sufficient graces, though all the time he stands at the door of their hearts, and knocks there, offering all necessary succours. If they receive these sparingly, the cause is in wilful obstacles, let them but remove these, and they will receive more abundant helps. Can a man, who wilfully shuts his eyes at bright noon-day, accuse the sun, as if it did not give light? On the contrary side, they make that a pretext for their impiety, which severely condemns it. For, did not their own wilful malice first create, and is it not that,

that, which still continues to fortify their habits? They themselves are the authors of all their strength. Their tyranny, indeed, is now very great. But this motive again ought to engage them to resist without delay, and no longer increase one moment, such dire misfortunes.

3. Some say, they have often entered upon this work, but always fallen back again, and now look upon it almost with despair, unless some lucky accident weaken their chains. But those miscarriages happened, because the resolutions were too faint, only half-wills. A thorough and perfect resolution breaks all obstacles at once; they would almost vanish and disappear before it. It is often our cowardice that exaggerates, or even creates out of phantoms, the difficulties of a conversion. *It is not, says the heathen philosopher Seneca, ep. 104. because things are difficult, that we dare not aim at them; but they appear difficult, because we have not courage.* In habits, the difficulties are strong indeed; but if we begin in earnest, and form a perfect resolution; they, — though never so real, will be already half vanquished. Nothing is so hard to be done, which serious application does not master. Experience shews how incredibly persons find themselves advanced by it, insensibly and before they are aware, in what before they thought impossible. Even the effectual will, once thoroughly formed, with an entire courage and unshaken purpose, goes the greater part of the way, as a heathen poet justly observed.

*Who sets about hath half perform'd the deed,
Dare to be wise, and if you would succeed,
Begin*.*

If the severity of the conflict dismays any one, let him not look too long before him at once, not to be dejected. Let him take his resolutions first

* *Dimidium facti qui bene cepit habet*

Sapere aude,

Incipe. — HORAT. l. 1. ep. 2, v. 40,

for one day or week, and when that is over for another. Such a prospect will not seem so affrighting or impossible; yet he will by that means, in a short time, find his obstacles overcome. An ancient Solitary said to himself, in the morning, he would fast till noon; then, that he would prolong it till night, and so on, till he had brought himself to imitate the greatest fasters in the desert. Let the sinner consider the examples of *St. Mary Magdalen*, *St. Augustin*, and of innumerable souls who have happily broke far stronger habits, and encourage himself, saying to his soul: Canst not thou do what this and those have done, so many weak and tender men and women, so many labouring under greater difficulties? The difficulty is to form an effectual resolution, determined to use all violences, and break through all obstacles.

4. Every one must be encouraged in this conflict, if he considers that the difficulties will daily grow lighter, and at length be even changed into delights. He will then joyfully repeat to himself: *Because I have laboured a little, I have found to myself much repose.* Eccl. iii. 35. This the Holy Ghost assures him: *In its work thou shalt labour a little, and shall soon eat of its fruits.* Eccl. vi. 20. And again; *I will lead thee through the paths of justice, which, when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be streightened, and running, thou shalt meet no stumbling-block.* Prov. vi. 11. Oh! How agreeable will the sweets of liberty and virtue seem to such a soul! What a pleasure will it be to be delivered from the slavery of her habits, and to see her chains broken!

At first, a thing seems to thee insupportable; in process of time, by custom, thou wilt judge it not so hard; soon after, thou wilt not feel it; and then shortly it will even delight thee, says *St. Bernard*, l. 1. de confid. and before him, *St. John Climacus*, Gr. l. n. 18. This *St. Cyprian* witnesses by his own experience, ad Do-

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nat. *I formerly said to myself, says he, how is so great a change possible? But after a second birth in Christ had made me a new man, my troubles all vanished in a wonderful manner. What had seemed difficult was easy; what was thought impossible, I saw then to be feasible.* And St. Augustin, who, before his conversion, had thought he could never live without these or those pleasures, soon after said with jubilation of heart. *How sweet was it immediatly to me to be without the enchanting charms of those follies! What I once feared to lose, it was my joy to be freed from.* l. 8. confess. c. 3.

5. Certain unthinking sinners say they will convert themselves hereafter. Alas! Who ever designedly gave time to an enemy to strengthen himself by reinforcements? Who finding a burthen too heavy now, would wait till it should be doubled? Trees are not to be pulled up after they have taken deep root. And experience shews the truth of that divine oracle. *The young man, according to his way, even when he is grown old, he will not depart from it.* Prov. xxii. 6. He shall be filled with vices as his bones are with marrow. These will never forsake him, but will sleep with him in the dust and in hell. Job xx. 12.

They will repent hereafter; but they do not reflect that God is daily, in punishment of their resistance, withdrawing himself farther from them. Sampson had often broken his cords, and revenged himself on the Philistines; seeing himself again bound by them, said yet laughing in himself; *I will go forth as before, and shaking myself break my bonds, and revenge myself on my enemies.* Judic. vi. 20. But alas! he said this, little then knowing that God had forsaken him. So the habitual sinner will find his presumption justly punished, and himself abandoned under the tyranny of his passions. Again, his habit gaining ground in the meanwhile, will bind him much harder, and will change the face of his soul

soul, much for the worse. All the seeds of God, the gifts of nature, the benefits of grace, the sentiments of religion, will soon be corrupted in her by-lying, and, as it were, rotting in her disorders. A spiritual blindness will spread itself over her understanding. God will forsake her, and even watch to make her abuse of his long forbearance, the victim of his justice. He will revenge his own cause, and by his own hand, conduct her punishment. *Mine is vengeance—that their foot may slip,* says he, *Deut. xxxii. 55.* He will pronounce this sentence upon her. *He that is in filth, let him be filthy still.* *Apoc. xxii. 11.*

Second Point.

6. The tyranny of a vicious habit, ought to move us to dread and shun its dangers; or, without delay, to root it out, if it be already our misfortune. A habit, whether of good or evil, is of wonderful force, and draws a soul with a violence quite incredible to those who have never experienced it. One who has formed long habits of virtue, cannot suddenly lose them. This is still more true in vicious habits, especially in carnal sins, such as impurity and drunkenness. To this many things concur. The organs of the body, by frequent use, acquire such a disposition to those acts as to run into them of themselves, and sometimes without reflection, as we see in habitual swearers. Nothing but extreme watchfulness and perfect violence, can stop them. These reiterated acts also imprint in the soul, a certain imperious quality, which drags her by a kind of necessity, and which is called a sort of a second nature. Every act makes this deeper and stronger, driving in, as it were, a new nail. The poor soul is enslaved and chained by it, scarce remaining mistress of her own will: or to speak more properly, her will is become her chain, and is so captivated

tivated that she can scarce possibly disengage herself. She is bound fast down, not by any outward chain, but by her own iron-will, as *St Augustin* expresses it from his own woful experience; *Suspiram ligatus non ferro alieno, sed meâ ferreâ voluntate. Conf. l. 8.* The poor will is so absolutely possessed as to be reduced into a perfect slavery under the tyranny of this habit, and to have almost lost the command of itself.

7. Moreover; A habit of sin destroys the three barriers which God has set on our souls, to defend us from sin, *viz.* shame of evil, fear of God, and dread of punishment. Any of these often stops the sinner, and preserves him from committing the evil, which his passions suggest. But a criminal habit breaks them all down, hurries on the soul like a torrent, and blinds her to all other considerations, except only that of its infamous object. God has taken away her force, and abandoned her to pillage. *Isa. v.*

Add; that habit produces such a blindness in the understanding, and such a hardness of heart, that God's terrible threats, the frightful scenes of judgment, and a miserable eternity, examples or other visits of God, make but small impressions on the sinner, and the most pathetic exhortations touch him not. *The impious man, when he is come into the depth, contemns. Prov. xviii. 3.* Only a miracle of grace can convert him. He will often deplore his misery, and make faint resolutions; but a firm effectual will to convert himself, costs tears of blood.

8. *St. Augustin* observes, *Tr. 49. in Joan.* that in the three persons raised corporally from the dead by our Saviour, the three states of sinners are figured. The soul fallen into sin by surprise, by the daughter of the prince of the synagogue. Christ only said to her: *Rise, daughter*, and she arose alive. The soul fallen with full deliberation, by the widow of *Naim's* son, *Luke ix. 14.* Christ touched the

coffin to raise him. *Lazarus*, who had been four days in his grave, and began already to putrify, figures sinners buried in habit. To restore him to life, it cost Jesus many tears. He prayed as for something extraordinary; he was troubled, he wept, and cried out with a loud voice: *Lazarus, come forth.* John xi. 45. To raise him was the most difficult miracle. His hands and feet were tied, his body wrapped in a shroud, bound with bands, and laid under a large stone. Such is the state of a sinner, plunged in a habit. Many engagements of his affections bind him, many strong hindrances fold him, and a heavy load holds him down. *How difficultly does he rise, whom the weight of custom oppresses,* cries out *St. Augustin.* The reasons hereof are plain, from the incontestible principles already laid down. For the habitual sinner is buried in the stench of his crimes, a heavy load is laid upon him, and *he is bound by the chains of his sins.* Prov. v. 12.

O sinners, *This very day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Ps. xlv. 8. Open your hearts to God's grace, and your ears to his gracious calls. The Son of God approaches you, and cries out with a loud voice; *Lazarus, come forth.* Sinner awake, arise from your iniquity, come out of this sepulchre of death. He is able still to restore you to life. He would not continue to call you, if he did not earnestly desire your conversion. You have your voice left; cry out then to him most earnestly, from the depth of your miseries, though they are extreme; he will most certainly deliver you. Let the difficulties be never so great, a firm resolution, with his grace, will remove them; and though your deliverance were to cost never so much, it would still be indispensable, and eternity deserves far more. A delay in this great work is sure, in the ordinary course of providence, to lose all, and that irretrievably.

Third

Third Point.

9. As dreadful and tyrannical as evil habits are, they are easily formed, and grow thus violent imperceptibly. Their imperious tyranny and terrible consequences, no ways declare themselves in the beginning. The first steps do not, in appearance, lead so far, nor do their effects seem so fatal. And one is a step to another, in such a manner, that a soul falls into the next still more easily, and is a slave whilst she yet imagines herself free, is fast chained before she sees or thinks of any such thing. A single thread is weak, but many wreaths twisted together, make a cord too strong to be broken. A plant pushes continually, but so insensibly, that to those who see it every day, there appears no change in it from one day to the next; yet it mounts apace, and in a short time acquires its full growth; and this from a root hidden in the earth, and not to be perceived. In like manner do habits form themselves, and acquire the greatest strength before their rise or increase is perceived. The man is not himself aware of it till he thinks of disengaging himself: he only finds how fast he is bound, when he offers to break his cords. Then he is surprised to see the extreme violence which he suffers, in the separation from such a person, for whom before he only perceived in himself what he thought an affection of a just esteem, or in the renouncing such a place or action. He says, I could not have believed my soul had been thus captivated: I never, before this moment, felt the disposition of my heart. This is not that the engagement had not the same force before, but he had not perceived those chains which delighted him: for our heart goes farther than we design, and without thinking of it, or observing its motions.

10. The most tyrannical habit, in the beginning, was but a small spark, in which no one could foresee such terrible consequences; but the fire gained by degrees, and became a devouring flame, which baffled all endeavours, and was not now to be resisted without violent means. Ah! men see not whither this liberty, this company, this affection, this secret pride or envy will carry them. But habits are formed, and acquire strength very fast, and the extremities of fury, extravagance, blindness and madness to which they, at length, blindly hurry men, are astonishing. In virtues, indeed, they meet with contradictions and obstacles, from opposition of concupiscence and the passions. But, by a contrary rule, vice finds, in the corruption of concupiscence, only attraction and nourishment. The inclinations of nature, depraved by sin, tending of their own accord to delight in it, and the senses being flattered and charmed by it, these give a wicked habit the greatest progress. So a man rolling down a steep hill, or falling down a rapid torrent, is carried as swiftly as the declivity is steep, or the stream more impetuous. Habits of virtue rise up, as it were, against the stream; but vice falls down the current. Virtue has the basis of the passions against it, and must master them before it can reign in our hearts; but vice follows it. Virtue is planted in our heart as in a soil, through the corruption of sin, become strange to it, and in which it cannot grow, unless it be cultivated with great care, attention and labour, and continually nourished and watered with divine grace: but vice is a weed of the proper growth of this soil.

*He that once sins, like him that slides on ice,
Goes swiftly down the slippery ways of vice:
Tho' conscience checks him, yet those rubs gone o'er,
He slides on smoothly, and looks back no more.*

JUVENAL, Sat. 13.

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11. The first sin is single, but unless speedily blotted out by a sincere repentance, makes a second more easy. By two or three falls, a custom with a habit or proneness is produced: this custom not resisted, becomes a second nature, as *St. Augustin* says. The first acts begin a chain, which binds the soul and clogs her will with fetters; every sin is a new link, as it were, and locks her firmer and closer. In this state, she is a slave. She, indeed, often says, she will arise and free herself: she makes often resolutions of this; but as often the weight of her habit draws her back, and passion still triumphs. Hence proceed delays, trouble, agitations, conflicts, waves of contrary thoughts driving her backwards and forwards. She wills and wills not: desires to be disengaged, yet fears to be so; and goes on always dragging her chains, both hating, and yet delighted with her slavery. She heaps crime upon crime, and engages herself, as it were, laughing in a necessity of sinning and of damnation. This expression is not too strong. For habit is a kind of violence which captivates the will. *Velle meum tenebat inimicus. St. Augustin's Confess.* The Holy Ghost compares the power such a soul has of converting herself to that of a black-a-moor to change the colour of his skin, or a leopard his motley spots. *Jer. xiii. 35.* things naturally impossible. Not that these comparisons are perfectly adequate: but they shew the great difficulty of the conversion of the habitual sinner.

My soul, as sinful habits may be so easily contracted, yet are so imperious, and so fatal, watch attentively over all thy inclinations, thoughts and actions, and spare nothing to preserve thyself from this dreadful enemy, which, if once admitted, can never be expelled without the severest martyrdom, and conflicts, and tears even of blood; or, what is more to be feared, will never be overcome at all, but carry thee, reeking from thy sins, into the eternal

nal pit. If it be already thy misfortune to groan under this evil, free thyself without delay. Be not discouraged at resistance. It is impossible to die to sin without much sadness, sorrow, pain and contradiction to corrupt nature, which is in love with its own chains and evil habits. But victory will soon turn this into happy freedom and joy. The devil perceiving thy desire to rise, will employ all his malice to stifle it, by suggestions of despair: but confidence in God will easily defeat him.

MEDITATION XIII.

ON THE SIN OF RELAPSE.

1. **A** Sin of a relapse is most enormous.
2. The obstacles to its conversion are, in a particular manner, very great.
3. The ordinary resources of a conversion lose their force by it.

First Point,

1. To relapse into sin, is to return to it, after having renounced it by repentance. This may be either with or without a custom or habit of sin; for a custom implies a frequency of the acts, which may be when no repentance has preceded; and a habit adds a propension to sin, arising from repeated actions. A sin of relapse carries along with it a particular enormity. Its malice is exaggerated by three circumstances which accompany it, viz. a notorious contempt of God, a special perfidiousness and ingratitude. A contempt of the divine Majesty is a general circumstance found in all sin; but a relapse contains a particular and remarkable kind of

of contempt. By it, a sinner undoes again what he had so solemnly done for God. He had destroyed in his soul the works of the devil, banished him out of his heart, restored it to God, who had again taken possession of it, and re-established in it the kingdom of his grace, sanctified and honoured it again with his gifts, and with his most holy presence, and made it his throne on earth. The relapsing sinner overturns all this great work, and makes use of so extraordinary a mercy of God, only to insult him the more outrageously. If a king had not only pardoned a base traitor, but restored him to all his forfeited titles and honours, and to the highest posts and dignities of his empire, would he not think himself most grievously injured, and his Majesty trampled upon, if that wretch should return again to his villainous practices against his person and crown. Would not this be a part so wicked and base, that it seems scarcely possible that any man should be so abandonedly profligate, and lost to all sentiments, as to be capable of it? This, however, is the treatment which the sovereign God of heaven and earth, receives from the relapsing sinner, who, with the most contemptuous baseness, tramples upon and destroys in himself his most precious gifts, and by them insults his bounty. *If I re-build what I have destroyed, I make myself a prevaricator*, that is, remarkably so, says the Apostle, *Gal. iii. 8.*

2. The sinner does this with the most perfect knowledge of what he is doing. He has tasted, and had experience of the service of Christ, and compared the sweetness and glory of his holy yoke with the baseness and slavery of sin. It is after the trial and knowledge of both sides, that he pronounces sentence in favour of sin, and gives the preference to the devil; after having, by penance, says *Tertullian, l. de penit. c. 7.* renounced God's enemy, the devil.

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He causes him again to triumph over God, and makes himself his prey; that he having recovered his soul, may exult against the Lord. Though it cannot be spoke without trembling, nor thought of without horror, does he not formally prefer Satan to God? For he seems to have made a comparison, after knowing both, and, by an absolute sentence, pronounced him the better master, whose servant he, after all, chuses rather to be; as he before did penance to God for his sins, so now he makes atonement to the devil, for that holy penance, by an execrable repentance of it, and hereby makes himself so much the more detestable to God, as he becomes more pleasing to the devil. Though this is not done by an express thought of such a formed judgment in the mind, which would be the most terrible blasphemy; yet it is done in fact, which is still the most terrible contempt, and such as cannot be thought of. Nor can the sinner here alledge any excuse of ignorance or surprize, as he was perfectly instructed on one side, in all that regards the inestimable value of God's grace, and on the other, in the nature of the offence, and in the danger of the occasions that lead to it.

3. The enormity of a relapse is aggravated also, by a signal perfidiousness which it involves. The sinner, when he repents, promises to God, in the most solemn manner, to renounce sin for ever, and passes this his engagement into the most sacred contract with him. Men are jealous of their word when given even to a fellow-creature, and there is nothing they abhor more than the character of a perfidious wretch; and certainly nothing is more inviolable than a fidelity to engagements, which is the bond, nay the soul and essence of public faith, and without which no contracts, commerce or society amongst men could subsist. But the relapsing sinner is guilty of the greatest violation of it that can be possible. He breaks his word which he
had

had given to God, *first*, in his solemn baptismal vows, and renews as often at least as he frequents the sacraments. So often was a sacred contract passed between him and God, the condition of which was on his side this engagement, without which almighty God had never admitted him to pardon and his highest graces; for it was on condition that he reciprocally bound himself unto him, that he enriched and honoured him, and engaged himself always to treat him as his Son. This infidelity is then the basest breach of faith, of faith given to God, and this in the most solemn manner, in the holy place, in the face of the altars, all the blessed spirits of heaven being witnesses and depositaries thereof: in a contract and alliance sealed, by all that is most holy and most terrible; confirmed by the blood of the Lamb of God, the immaculate Lamb, and by the most sacred ceremonies; vowed in the hands of God's ministers, who received them in his name. By an unparalleled treachery, this contract is broken, these holy engagements trampled upon by a base creature, whilst God remains most faithful on his side, and the eternal allegiance and fidelity sworn to him, in the face of heaven and earth, violated, even whilst he is still showering down his favours on the transgressor. The altars, the walls, the ministers who received these engagements in the person of Christ himself, all the heavenly spirits, who were witnesses of the penitent's tears and protestations, will rise up in judgment against him, and condemn him from the words of his own mouth. *The stone from the wall will cry out. Hab. ii. 11.*

Nothing can be a greater baseness than that which this unfaithful soul is guilty of. How contemptible art thou made, iterating thy first ways, which thou hadst, in so sacred and solemn a manner, renounced and forsworn. "*Quam vilis facta es nimis, iterans vias tuas.*" *Jer. ii. 36.* That of the
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true proverb has happened to them; The dog has returned to his vomit; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing. Pet. ii. 2.

To be a child, and for one never to know his own mind in things of the greatest importance, is the highest degree of baseness.

4. Ingratitude likewise aggravates a relapse, above other sins. Gratitude is an essential obligation of a creature, and an homage, of which the Creator shews himself exceeding jealous. And the greater any benefit is, the blacker must be the ingratitude against it. Now; no mercy can be greater or granted to one more unworthy, than the pardon of sin. The soul was a member of the devil, a monster of iniquity, loaded with curses and anathemas, which were to have been eternal. She is, by God's unspeakable mercy, delivered from these dreadful miseries, made his child, heiress of his kingdom, and enriched with his greatest graces, honours, and privileges. This inestimable benefit, yet subsisting in all its lustre and all its advantages is not only forgotten, but trampled upon. The Holy Ghost, with his graces, is contemptuously banished the heart, and his seat sacrilegiously made the throne of Satan, who is introduced in his room. What would be our just indignation against a villainous traitor, who, after being pardoned by his prince, should again rebel and bereave him of his crown and life, as the base Egfride is said by some to have done against the merciful King Edmund Ironsides: though, except that monster, there is not perhaps another example of such an ingratitude to be found. Yet this is nothing to the unparallelled ingratitude of the relapsing sinner.

This his ingratitude is the greater, as the sins formerly forgiven, were more grievous and more numerous; and as the relapse is in itself more heinous. Though the sins before pardoned, are not revived again by a relapse, as Pope *Gelasius*, 1 *dist.*

4 *de penit. c. 24. St. Prosper, ad cap. Gall. p. 198.*
St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and others, prove;
 yet, as all agree with *St. Thomas, 3 P. q. 88. a. 1,*
2, & 3. they return equivalently, on account of the
special ingratitude of the relapse; but in a certain
proportion, known only to God, according to the
enormity of the relapse. Whence St. Gregory the
Great, in his Morals, quoted by St. Thomas, says:
As good works which die by sin, revive by repentance;
so also evil works, which are blotted out by repentance,
by a relapse, revive to punishment.

O man, sin not after pardon, be not wounded after a
cure, be not again defiled after grace. A fault, after
forgiveness, is more grievous, a wound, after being once
healed, is worse; it is base to return to the mire after
having been cleansed. He is ungrateful to the pardon,
unworthy of heaven, and deserves not to be cleansed.
St. Chrys, hom. de lapsi primi, Hom.

Second Point.

5. A true conversion after a relapse, becomes much more difficult. Our blessed Saviour says, that when the unclean spirit enters a man, from whom he had been before expelled, *he taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. Luke xi. 26.* If this be true of one relapse, what must we think of repeated ones multiplied upon one another. The obstacles of a sincere conversion become much greater to such a one, than they are to other sinners. The devil re-enters him with his forces redoubled, holds him now in a much stronger captivity, and seems to possess him in peace. The sinner, on the other side, is made weaker as he is farther removed from God, and his passions gain strength, and by his relapses, form themselves into imperious habits, not to be easily broke. He could have easily destroyed the serpent whilst it was little: the fiercest lions are easily

easily crushed whilst very young; but when grown up, will make the most valiant man without arms, to tremble. Little rivulets are easily turned off near their spring; but surpass our art when swollen into great rivers.

6. These habits of sin are usually accompanied with habits of the most sacrilegious abuses of the sacraments and other means of grace, and always with a great spiritual blindness and insensibility. The sinner is lulled asleep under his dangers, and neither sees nor feels his miseries. He is at ease for the past, having often confessed all, though his false reconciliations only blinded him, and added new wounds, harder to be healed than the first.

7. Inconstancy itself grows into a habit, and the most pernicious of habits. The sinner is accustomed to find both the service of God and the slavery of the devil tiresome in their turns, and to endeavour often to change sides. Hence, when glutted and wearied with sin, he seeks to return to God, but doing this only by halves, soon relapses into his sins, which he never perfectly renounced. He is like a man, sick of some lingering incurable dry tympany, or some other such distemper, which affords intervals of an apparent recovery: but, as the bowels are already rotten and pierced in many places, the distemper soon shews itself again, and the wind, pent up and dilated, makes greater ravages within him than ever, till the next evacuation and respite, at which the deluded patient is again big with the flattering confidence of an imaginary health. Just such is the case of the inconstant penitent, or habitually relapsing sinner. In his fits of repentance, the devil is no ways alarmed at the projects of a conversion which he then forms, and the imperfect efforts he makes: he knows these will go no farther than before, and that he lifts up his hand, indeed, but will not dare effectually to give the stroke, and that the circle of repentance and
sin

sin will still run in the same way, and the old alternative still take its course. The subtle enemy therefore gives him little disturbance, as one whom he holds in peace; only he helps him to shut his eyes to his miseries, and fondly to deceive himself in his pretended conversion.

8. This inconstancy is not only a tyrannical habit and slavery, hard to be shook off, but it also puts the greatest obstacles to the corresponding with grace, engendering in the soul an inveterate lethargy and stupidity, which nothing can stir or move; and which is incapable of any settled firm dispositions. Hence our Saviour says of such: *No man setting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke ix. 62.* He does not say, is excluded from it, but what expresses much more, is not fit, i. e. has qualities and dispositions incompatible with a vocation to it. Let him then speedily shake them off, and renounce sin once for all, and in good earnest.

Third Point.

9. If a relapse, on one hand, increases the obstacles of a sincere conversion, on the other, it weakens exceedingly the ordinary means and resources thereof, and makes them often unprofitable, and by their abuse, pernicious. St. Paul considered this when he said: *It is impossible, (i. e. very hard) for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost; have moreover tasted the word of God; and the powers of the world to come; and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying to themselves the Son of God, and making him a mockery. Heb. vi. 4.* One first converted from sin is struck at the new light of grace, and moved with shame and grief to have offended God, and renounced his reason. But this resource loses a great deal of its force, and

and is generally unprofitable to the inconstant sinner. He has often experienced the lights of grace, and now takes little notice of them. *Who were once illuminated.* The first time the Jews in the desert saw the pillar of light over their camp, they were surprised and moved, so as to fear the punishment of their disobedience; but after they had been accustomed to that sign of heaven, they frequently murmured and rebelled: the pillar appeared still, but made little impression on their minds: by custom, they were become insensible to it.

Not only the supernatural lights of the understanding by grace, but also the inspirations of the will, become often unprofitable to such. These likewise they have tried, and now little regard them. *They have tasted the gift of God.* What can inspiration now offer them, which they have not often contemned? What! Can the strongest charms of grace prevail over a heart long accustomed to receive its motions in vain? The same we may say of the word of God, pious books, sacraments, and the other means of grace. *They have tasted of the word of God, and of the powers of the world to come.* Long abuse had engaged the soul in a habit of contemning them. What then must the unhappy soul do? Is she to be abandoned to despair? Are these means to be laid aside? God forbid. But these dispositions of the heart are to be vigorously removed, and a more serious use made of them. Till then there is no appearance they will be more effectual than hitherto. *Thy wound is incurable, thy bruise desperate,—remedies have no power of profiting thee.* “*Insanabilis est fractura tua, pessima plaga tua—curationum utilitas non est tibi.*” *Jer. xxx. 12, 13.*

10. God usually withdraws his most powerful graces, and abandons such relapsing sinners. Witness the impious king *Sedecias*, one day listening to

to the prophet, another day casting him into dungeons or lions dens. Witness the *Jews*, after frequent relapses, forsaken by God in the most dreadful manner. An abuse of grace justly draws on a subtraction of it. *The earth that drinketh in the rain which often comes upon it—but bringeth forth thorns and briars, is reprobate, and very near to a curse, whose end is, to be burnt. Heb. vi. 8.* God's patience is wearied out: he has borne with this sinner these several relapses, but at last casts him off. *On the three crimes of Damascus, and on the fourth I will not convert him. Amos i. 3.** My soul, if thou hast recovered God's grace, by his unspeakable mercy, be ever most solicitous, watchful and fearful, lest thou again forfeit it. A relapse would be more dangerous and more enormous. *It had been better for them never to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them. 2 Pet. ii. 21.* Praise the goodness of God in bearing thy past relapses, and never cease to deplore them with continual tears of repentance and bitter sorrow.

* The author of the Commentary on the Relapse, under the name of *St. Ambrose, c. 4. t. 3. p. 834. ed. vet.* compares the habitual relapsing sinner, to a man lying in the mire, who should beg of another to draw him out, yet, as often as he would stretch out his hand to free him, the cowardly wretch should pull back his arm, and plunge himself deeper under his mud. Would not the other, at last, wearied and angry to be so often deluded, go away, and leave him in his sink. *Do not those act in the same manner with God, who often pray him to deliver them from their vices, yet embrace them so close as to refuse to be effectually separated from them? Will not he, to punish their contempt of his Majesty, at last forsake them?*

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MEDITATION XIV.

REPENTANCE IN INCONSTANT RELAPSING SIN-
NERS, USUALLY FALSE.

1. **T**HIS appears from the nature of the grace of reconciliation.
2. And from the nature of firm sincere will.
3. It is confirmed from the practice and doctrine of the pastors and doctors of the Church from the earliest ages.

First Point.

1. The misfortune of relapses is common among Christians. The Church's tribunal is always thronged with penitents. At least at Easter, even the most abandoned habitual sinners never fail to pretend to sincerely repent, and begin a new life. Yet a few days, as if it were for decency and fashion's sake, are no sooner over, but most of them are the same men they were. Those, who the last year were drunkards, this year return to the taverns, frequent old occasions, and fall into the excesses they pretended so solemnly to abjure for ever. Habitual swearers, after a short time of restraint, continue their ancient course as if it had never been interrupted, are as subject to passion and other occasions of their criminal course of life as before, and renew their sins. Those who are subject to choler, make their families and neighbourhood witnesses their repentance was but a short respite, not an entire renunciation of their follies and transports. In
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short, though the Churches are filled with sighs of penitents, the world seems much the same, little or no alteration appears in its manners: its taverns are equally full of revelling, ribling, and drunkenness; its streets still ring with execrable oaths grating our ears; its stage, the bane of innocence, continues to be crouded, without any apprehension of evil or danger; and sin seems to reign as much as ever. Ah! could this be, were mens repentance sincere as it is pretended. May we not say of such sinners penitence what *St. Gregory* said of *Judas's*, that it was worse than his fall. It only adds a new crime, and lulls them into a state of insensibility under the greatest evils. It is of such false repentance, that *St. Chrysostom* says, *Hom. 3. in 2 Cor.* *The devil leads some by sin, others by penance, into damnation.*

2. For such as live in an habitual vicissitude of penance and sin, of rising and falling, can never have been true penitents. The sacraments they receive in that state of inconstancy, can be no better than sacrileges and hypocrisy, how much soever they may flatter themselves upon their pretended sincere dispositions. It must be allowed indeed, that a sacrament does not confirm all men in grace: he may relapse after it by surprise, and by some extraordinary occasion, or after the grace of reconciliation has been gradually weakened in him by a train of smaller infidelities. But to return to sin soon and easily; must clearly demonstrate the conversion was false and only pretended; especially if this has frequently happened, as in habitual relapses. This appears from the nature of the grace of justification. True repentance is a grace, and the most extraordinary of graces. Now, all works of God are strong and effectual. He raised not *Lazarus* from the grave, for him to die immediately again. His cures of the sick and lame were not for an instant, but true and to endure. So when he

justifies a sinner, he makes it not a shadow, but a solid work, able to stand proof. The foolish man may build on sand; not so God. His edifice is raised on a rock, with good foundations, able to bear up against winds and storms. He does not raise the sinner by halves, so weakly as only to furnish in him an immediate triumph to the devil over himself and his grace. Such a repentance is a shadow of a conversion, only that the devil may be more glorified by it; as Christ says, *Lazarus's* short death was only a sleep that God might be glorified by it.

3. God accompanies sanctifying grace in the justification of a sinner, with all other necessary helps and graces to support and preserve it. Before a fall, these must be long in weakening by degrees: many dangers neglected, many smaller infidelities must have impaired these, and paved a way to the fatal precipice. The gulph of a relapse follows not so close the grace of reconciliation. An habit of grace is settled in firm and lasting dispositions; is never floating and inconstant. It is then plain that where a man relapses again easily, by ordinary temptations, in a short time; where he falls without having for some time resisted the enemy, used great efforts, maintained his ground a considerable time, his conversion could never have been true. The dignity of the nature of the sacrament obliges us to form this judgment.

4. *St. Paul, Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6, 9.* gives this essential idea of a true repentance, that it resembles the resurrection of Christ, who, now he is risen, dies no more. Do we see *David, St. Paul, the Magdalen*, or other true penitents, return again to the vomit? it is the double-minded that is inconstant in his ways. *Vir duplex animo inconstans est in viis suis. Jac. i. 8.* Such resemble phantoms of bodies, which appear a short time, like bodies risen, but soon vanish, and the corpse itself never leaves the grave.

Second Point.

5. The very nature of repentance shews it to be a permanent state. In the conversion of a sinner, a contract is passed between him and God. Almighty God engaged himself to pardon him past offences, and to afford him abundant graces and succours for the time to come. The condition on the sinner's side, without which there could be no such thing as true repentance, was, a sincere sorrow for, and a hearty detestation of sin above all things, with an effectual resolution of avoiding it and all the occasions of it, at all rates, for evermore. To pretend to repent, without this essential disposition, is only to mock God, insult the Church, and profane the most holy sacraments. Now, is it possible one who after confession returns to the vomit, almost on the first occasion, who commits, perchance, before the end of the week, and by old occasions, what he pretends to have abhorred above all evils on the Sunday, whose life, perhaps, is made up of such repentances and relapses, should ever have truly detested sin?

6. In penance, an entire new creature is formed with great labour and successive endeavours. This is a work of time, raised by degrees. It has its commencement and its progress, till it be at length finished. The will in sin is weak, sick to death, fettered and fast bound; it requires time to recover, pass through a state of convalescence, and regain its strength and liberty. God's graces in a conversion, are bestowed according to the ordinary law of his providence, gradually: they work some time to finish the change. They first excite the will; then raise it higher, and lastly complete the thorough reformation. God can convert the most criminal soul in a moment: we have such examples
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in holy scripture: but all miraculous in grace. In the common course of things, the first motions are only desires, half wills, small efforts. In many hasty confessions of mortal sin, these are mistaken for real changes, and pass for repentances. Hence false penances and relapses are so frequent. For vicissitudes of rising and falling are unknown among true penitents, according to the constant doctrine of the Fathers of the Church.

7. Penance does not make a soul impeccable. Man is always frail and changeable. But the will cannot be turned from one opposite to another all at once. Repentance fixes the will strongly: grace is master, and cannot be expelled but by many struggles. The will is quite changed: the affections are removed from their darling objects to their opposites: the soul now hates sovereignly what she before loved and adhered to. In a word, the sinner is become another man, having put off the old man with all his acts and desires, and put on the new one, who is created according to God. *Eph. iv. 33.* No one certainly can imagine a person thus changed, can easily fall back into sin. For the same will alternatively to abhor sovereignly and to embrace immediately the same thing, is almost as plain an impossibility, as for it to love and hate the same thing at the same time. Our will commands itself, and cannot change but by its own free choice. It is an illusion for a man to say he had the will, yet did not do the thing when he had it in his power.

8. Nor is the case altered if he relapsed by some ordinary occasion, which ought to have been foreseen and avoided, had the resolution been perfect. Did we ever see a man earnest in the pursuit of an affair, who did not study the means to compass it, and to ward off accidents and dangers? A merchant

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putting to sea, takes care to inform himself of, and to shun the rocks and sands to be met in his voyage. Whosoever then relapses by such occasions, which he ought to have foreseen and prevented, or armed himself against, or by ordinary temptations, had no effectual desire to avoid sin.

9. He imagines himself converted; but we are obliged to be persuaded that he deceives himself, and does not know his own dispositions. He mistakes certain ineffectual motions for a thorough conversion. He thinks he can best sound his own heart, and is the best judge of his own resolutions. But of all men on earth he is the most incapable. The bias of passions sways him, self-love blinds him, faint desires and half-resolutions deceive him. We see, in the example of *St. Augustin* that a sinner may have very strong *velleities*, long before his heart is completely changed. But he will say, he is sure that now his resolution is perfectly taken. But he must give us leave to answer him with the philosopher *Seneca*, *ep. 112. ad Lucilium*. *I do not say, he lies; for I am persuaded he really thinks so: but bad men both love and hate their crimes at once. Let him then excuse us from believing him sincere, till the change of his life has convinced both himself and us, that he really is so.*

10. It is this actual amendment of life that only can prove the sincerity of his conversion, both to himself and others, because this alone can distinguish effectual resolutions from mere desires. All other signs are sometimes equivocal. The same words and protestations are often used by the most hardened sinners and perfect penitents. *Saul* used as strong expressions to *Samuel* as *David* to *Nathan*. Sighs and tears are also treacherous and deceitful. Who would not be convinced by the lamentable sighs of *Esau*, *Saul*, or *Antiochus*, which yet touched not the heart of God? We have then no other cer-
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tain rule to judge by but that laid down by our Redeemer: *Ye shall know them by their fruits, Matt. vii. 20.* A man's works are the fruits of his heart. It is only known and seen in them. A change of life, constant holy manners, a dread and careful shunning of all dangerous occasions and a practice of penitential works, would shew the heart new: but the heart can never be changed whilst it continues to produce the same fruit. The sinner may have resolved and wept, but perhaps is not perfectly changed. *Jesus* knows his interior, and gives his grace of reconciliation only to the sincere convert. *Many believed in his name: but Jesus did not trust himself to them, for he knew all men. John xi. 24.* It appears therefore, but is not really a repentance to often ask pardon for what we often commit, says *St. Clemens of Alexandria, Strom. l. 2. p. 439.* adding, that they who relapse after penance, do not differ from heathens, only by a fuller knowledge of sin.

Third Point.

11. The unanimous tradition and practice of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, make this truth incontestible. They are the channels through which we receive the waters of life, and the rules of virtue and salvation. We cannot then reject their authority in this point. Were their sentiments to be given at length, whole books might be copied out. Two short reflections will suffice to shew us their principles in this important article.

Nothing is more frequently spoke of, or manifest in Church History, than how cautious the ancients were not to expose our most holy sacraments to the profanation of sinners. Hence if any one, after having once performed canonical penance, had the misfortune to fall again, he was never admitted to it a second time, but remained excluded the participation

icipation of the sacraments till the article of death, in continual sighs and tears, preparing themselves to receive only then the benefit of reconciliation. The reasons they universally alledge for this severity, are, lest sin should be encouraged by such lenity, and false penitents admitted to the sacraments, lest it should be done in vain, if a second time; for it is not enough to be once admitted, says Tertullian, *de pœnit. c. 7.* And St. Austin, *ep. ol. 54. nunc 153. ad Maced.* says: It is cautiously and wholesomely provided, that place be allowed only once to that humble penance, lest a remedy by being too common should be less useful. St. Ambrose writes thus, *l. 2. de pœnit. p. 436.* Those are justly reprehended, who think that penance ought to be reiterated, because they are luxurious* in Christ. For, if they did penance truly, they would not think it to be afterwards reiterated; because, as there is but one baptism, so is there but one penance which is done publicly, and so of more grievous sins.

12. A second remark is, that for fear of being imposed upon by false penitents, they never gave the benefit of reconciliation, even after the first fall, till the sinner had given proof of his sincerity, by a long severe course of penances in humiliations, prayer, fasting on bread and water, lying on the ground and other mortifications, longer or shorter, according to their sins. So much did they fear a relapse and want of a perfect conversion.

For, as St. Isidore says, *l. de sum. bono*, and from him the Canon Law, *Dist. 5. de pœnit.* He is a scoffer, not a penitent, who commits what he repented of. Nor is he cleansed who weeps for his sins, yet does not forsake them, but reiterates after penance what he wept for. They knew that a conversion requires to will strenuously and perfectly: Not to pass to and fro a half-wounded will; in which one side rising is struggling with the other side falling, as St. Austin says, *Conf. B. viii. c. 8.*†

* 1 Tim. v. 11. † Facilitate Sacerdotis.

From these principles, in the tribunal of penance, a penitent is to be ordinarily believed the first time, if he has taken leisure, and used endeavours proportionably to his offence, except in violent habits which require a trial, or in sins of injustice, in which restitution is often most advisedly required before absolution. But in relapses which have easily followed repentance, not only a trial is requisite, but former sacraments are to be suspected, and carefully repeated,

MORAL DISCOURSES

ON THE

SUBLIME TRUTHS AND IMPORTANT
DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

DISCOURSE I.

ON PENANCE.

1. *The Virtue of Penance.*
2. *Interior Penance.*
3. *Contrition.*

1. **P**ENANCE may be considered either as it is a virtue, or as it is raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament of the new law. To understand it under the first character, it is defined by St. Thomas, 3 P. q. 85. a. 2. and the Schools; *A virtue by which a man bewails and labours to destroy his past sin.* For it is a sorrow of the mind, and a detestation of sin committed, for the sake of God, with a resolution of appeasing him for the past, and of never offending him any more. It has therefore two parts, the one interior, which is the contrition or compunc-

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tion of heart, consisting in the inward sorrow and detestation; the other exterior, which consists in satisfactory works, by which the sinner labours to chastise himself for sin, and to satisfy the divine justice, by revenging sin on the offender, his own guilty heart and flesh. These two parts are inseparable: both must concur, at least in some degree, to constitute this virtue; for though the interior be the most essential member, and, as it were, the soul of it, this cannot subsist without a firm will of practising the other part. Those who are for either the interior or the exterior alone, and without the other, embrace only a counterfeit, and a shadow, without having the virtue of penance itself.

2. Penance is to be reckoned amongst the moral virtues; for it is a good act which has its peculiar object, and its special difficulty to overcome, by which it is distinguished from other virtues, and constitutes one by itself; for it alone is employed in removing, and satisfying for sin. Also, it is criminal in a sinner not to grieve and labour to satisfy for having sinned; or to grieve for it to excess by despair. It must therefore be a virtue to regulate and govern this grief within its just bounds, so as by it to labour to remove and destroy sin in the criminal soul.

It is an absurd heresy, condemned by the Catholic Church, to pretend the virtue of penance requires nothing but a mere change of life, though even how can this be without a sorrow for past sins? The holy scripture, in every part, both in the old and new testament, requires expressly in penance, a real sorrow, and also works of satisfaction; for it joins with it groans, sighs, prayer, fasts, sackcloth and ashes. Whence all the Fathers being instructed in its school, give only this essential idea of it: *It is not enough for a sinner to change his manners and depart from sin, unless he satisfies God for what he has done, by the sorrow of repentance, by the groans of humiliation,*

humiliation, and by the sacrifice of a contrite heart, alms also accompanying, as St. Augustin says, *Serm. 351. de hom. 50. inter. 50. n. 12. t. 5. p. 1361.*

3. Penance is an infused virtue and the gift of of a particular grace. Though there may be a natural sorrow for sin, grounded on temporal motives, as on its temporal consequences, and natural baseness in the light of reason, which may help to draw the will from sin, yet this is not the true virtue of penance, which must be a sorrow for sin, conceived for God, produced by grace, grounded on supernatural motives proposed only by faith, such as the fear of hell, and the love of God. Hence this virtue is not a plant of our own growth, but infused into our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Wherefore *Jeremy* prays thus for it: *Convert me, and I shall be converted: because thou art the Lord my God. For after thou hast converted me, I have done penance. Jer. xxxi. 18.* It is only given through Jesus Christ, as being the precious fruit of his passion: *Acts v. 31. Acts xi. 18.* This is the doctrine of the holy Church, and the Council of *Trent* pronounces anathema against those that shall say a man can repent as he ought for justification, without the succour of the Holy Ghost. *Seff. 6. Can. 3.* This is also manifest from the very nature of this virtue, for the grace of justification being supernatural, so the means conducing to it must be also supernatural, the means and the end being always necessarily in the same order. Therefore faith, hope, the love of God, and repentance, must be all supernatural virtues. Such then is the nobleness of this virtue, that only the blood of Christ could purchase the least degree of it: and only God can bestow it.

4. God always offers us this grace, as he desires not the death of any sinner, but that he be converted and live. But it is to be obtained by earnest prayer, as repentance is excited only by the grace of God touching a man's heart, according to the words of

the Council of *Trent*, *Seff.* 6. c. 5. Faith, a fear of God's judgments, a firm hope in his mercy and his divine love, are its ingredients, and dispositions which prepare and raise a soul to it.

5. Every man, both the just and the sinner, is indispensibly bound to make the practice of this virtue, the continual exercise of his whole life. It is necessary for the obtaining the remission of any sin whatsoever. Its perpetual exercise is necessary for past mortal sin, for daily venial sin, and because it is the indispensable preservative against sin.

No mortal sin, whether hidden or known, can ever be forgiven without an explicit repentance. Venial sin requires at least, an implicit act of repentance, such as is contained in an act of the love of God, by which the will is drawn from all attachment to that venial sin, and is implicitly sorry for it, that is, is so disposed that it would excite an actual sorrow and contrition for it, if it occurred to the mind. This truth is so evident a principle of reason itself, that *St. Augustin*, *l. de 2 Anim*, c. 14. q. p. 90. says; *No country or man can be so barbarous as to say a person does not lie under a necessity of repenting, if he shall have sinned. For the law of nature dictates that whoever has sinned should repent of his offence, be sorry for what he has done, and seek a remedy.* He says again, *ep. 48. ad Vincent*, *Do not imagine that any one can pass from error to truth, or from any sin, whether great or small, to amendment, without repentance*: which words are related in the *Canon Law*, *Dist 1. de pœnit.* c. 43. And the Council of *Trent*, speaking of those who have forfeited God's grace, says; *Penance was at all times absolutely necessary to such, to recover grace and justice.* *Seff.* 14. c. 1. All sacrifices, sacraments, alms, or other the most holy actions, can never wash away any sin, without penance. Hence God said to the Jews who presumed on their sacrifices which they offered, without repenting of their sins: *Will holy flesh or victim take away from thee thy malices?* *Jeremy xi.* 15.

6. The

6. The exercise of the virtue of penance must be perpetual, during a man's whole life. *First*, Frequent acts of contrition are necessary not only for our daily venial, but also for fear of hidden mortal sins, which we may fall into without discovering them in ourselves. At least, we certainly fall into frequent venial offences; consequently we must perpetually have recourse to the remedy, and never cease, by the continual fresh application of it, immediately to heal the wounds we receive in our perpetual skirmishes with our spiritual enemies. This is to be done by bewailing our infidelities, by repeated acts of compunction; by assiduously praying for the forgiveness of them as our blessed Redeemer has taught us, by making this one of the petitions he has put in our mouths in his divine prayer; also by offering frequent sacrifices, alms, fasts, and performing other penitential works, in the sentiments of sincere compunction; particularly by frequent examens of our hearts and actions, to discover and correct immediately all the least failings. Without this care, they are very soon multiplied and formed into habits, leading to the most fatal consequences, as drops of rain multiplied, raise great floods, which sometimes overturn the strongest buildings. The sink in a ship must be often pumped out, or the water, entering only by single drops, will at length fill and sink the vessel. A most scrupulous attention to find out and amend our smallest faults, especially in our predominant passions, is absolutely necessary to stop their progress, and for us to maintain our ground in the service of God. This is, therefore, the constant employ of all the saints during their whole lives. *This is the perpetual labour of the just in this life, says St. Gregory, Mor. l. 11. c. 21. to discover, and by weeping and correcting all faults, to amend themselves continually.*

7. If

7. If a soul is conscious of having ever committed any one mortal sin, certainly she can never cease doing penance for it as long as she lives. She has repented of it; but is she sure her contrition and atonement were such as to have satisfied the divine justice, at least entirely, and to have blotted out all the remains of sin, and the punishment due to it? Ah! *St. Bernard*, that innocent dove of the Church, was quite overwhelmed with dread and horror, as often as he called to mind the uncertainty of grace. *Serm. 23. in Cant.* *St. Paul* himself, that great apostle and incarnate seraph of divine love, trembled at the same reflection. How ought we then to fear? We who know we have on many occasions provoked the anger of a God, and deserved his eternal hatred. How terrifying a thought is it? I am certain that I have offended God, but am uncertain whether I have yet satisfied his infinite justice and obtained pardon. Ah! my soul, I will always labour to perfect my penance. *Be not without fear for sin that is forgiven. Eccl. v. 5.*

Even though a penitent had received an assurance of pardon, as *St. Peter* and *St. Mary Magdalen* did from the mouth of Christ himself, and *David* by the prophet *Nathan*, yet he ought, with them, to prolong his penance till death. Can a soul that loves God, remember she has ever offended so great and good a Father, without grieving a-fresh for it? If her crime is remitted, this is only the infinite and undeserved mercy of God, the remembrance of which ought the more to excite her tears, that she could be rebellious against such a God; for her impiety and ingratitude are not hence made to have been less. Their enmity appears but the greater, as God's goodness shines the more by this: A rebel, who was pardoned by his gracious King, and restored to all his dignities and possessions, could not but be hence moved the more to regret his past treasons as often as they returned into his mind.

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So must the true penitent continue his penance for his sin all his life; as his crime, even by the fullest pardon, can never be undone. It was committed; it cannot now be hindered. Being effaced by pardon, it remains an eternal monument of God's mercy in the sinner indeed; but it is still true that he had rebelled against his Creator. *St. Mary Magdalen* with all her tears, could not undo her sins. That she had offended God is still eternally true. In seeing them blotted out, she admired, praised and loved the more the infinitely merciful Creator; but, even in this, she read the characters of her past baseness, and was stirred up to fresh tears. This is the wound which bleeds in all true penitents during their whole lives, and makes the sources of their tears to never dry up.

8. Holy *David*, though assured by God that his sin was forgiven him, yet lived the model of penitents to the end of the world, and, by the psalms of repentance which he composed, furnished all, in every future age, with the most feeling sentiments of compunction, which were dictated to him in his spirit of perfect penance, by the Holy Ghost himself, the true master of the heart in this virtue. Nor content thus to pour forth his soul continually in penitential prayer, every night, instead of closing his eyes to sleep, he watered his bed with his tears; and they were so frequent and so abundant in the day, that he says, they were to him as his food and drink. He laid aside his purple, to clothe himself with hair and sackcloth, though by these humiliations, and by those penitential weeds, he exposed himself to be the scorn and table-talk of all his subjects, as he testifies. We must remember he was justified by the assurance of God himself upon his repentance immediately after his fall, yet this was his severe penitential life, this his spirit of compunction. A court, the affairs of a kingdom, company, pleasures, nothing was able to divert his mind from
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his sin. He had offended God, so could never moderate or put an end to his sorrow but with his life. *My grief*, says he ever after, *is always in my sight.* *Pf. xxxvii. 18. My sin is always against me. Pf. i. 4.* How contrary is the practice of those superficial penitents, who, as soon as they are returned from confession, seem to forget they had sinned! Must not their repentance have been very imperfect; their idea of an offence of God very weak?

St. Mary Magdalen heard from the Saviour of the world that her sins were forgiven her, because she loved much. Yet, because she loved truly, she was not able to set bounds to her penance, till death finished it. With reason does *St. Gregory the Great* say of her, *Hom. 33. in Evang. When I think of the penance of a Mary Magdalen, I am moved to weep rather than speak any thing of it. For whose, even strong breast, do not the tears of that sinner move to sentiments of compunction? She considered what she had done: and therefore would not set any bounds to what she was to do.*

St. Peter not only was pardoned, but raised by Christ to the highest spiritual dignities and honours, and vested with the greatest graces, and supernatural gifts; yet neither the most ample and assured patent of full pardon, nor length of time, nor God's singular favours, nor the conversion of nations, the solicitude of all Churches, or his perpetual labours, fatigues and sufferings for Christ, were ever able, to make him forget his offence, or interrupt his penitential tears. To his last hour, he never heard the cock crow without weeping bitterly, at the remembrance of his sin. We cannot, without astonishment, read in the lives of many holy solitaries and others, the long and most severe penances to which they condemned themselves, and often for the slightest venial stains of youth, or only apprehensions of a greater offence: an *Eusebius* living always chained and bowed down to the ground, to
punish

punish himself for a short distraction, in listening to the word of God: an *Ephrem* continually weeping for a mere childish trick of play, in pursuing a cow, till it fell down a precipice: a *Macarius*, living a prodigy of austerities, chiefly lamenting a theft of two or three figs, when a child. Ah! if we do not imitate perfectly these patterns of true penance, at least we cannot but follow them at a distance, remembering always our past sins in the bitterness of our souls, praying daily to be perfectly cleansed from them, and adding perpetually works of satisfaction to expiate them.

Oh! my soul, what can I look upon in the whole world but what refreshes the remembrance of my sins, and obliges me to melt into tears? Can I look up to heaven, and not weep at the sight of that glorious kingdom which I basely renounced, at the remembrance of that gracious Father and Lord of Majesty, whom I rebelled against, and of those blessed spirits, whose eyes I turned from me by offending their God? Can I contemplate the light, and not bewail my blindness? Can I observe the regular movements of the stars, and the obedience of all creatures to their Creator's laws, and not weep for my disorders and transgressions? Can I cast my eyes on the earth, and not weep to see what I have defiled, and drawn down God's curses upon by my sins? The world puts me in mind how I have abused it. In every thing I see what I have perverted, or what I ought to renounce in penance and am unworthy of. The royal prophet invites, even dragons, reptiles and scorpions to praise God: only the sinner is excluded, as *St. Chrysostom* observes, *Serm. de ordinat. sua*. "Can I see any creatures, and not summon them to the praises of God; but struck at the remembrance of my base unworthiness and exclusion, sit down in confusion and bitter tears, desiring to join in this great office, but remembering his praises in the mouth

" of a sinner are * an abomination to him, who
 " says to such: *Why dost thou repeat my words, and*
 " *take my testament in thy mouth,* so polluted and
 " defiled?

" So I only dared do it a distance, and below the
 " basest insects, and no other ways than by senti-
 " ments of penance, hope in his mercy, and love
 " of goodness which I am unworthy to name, after
 " having wretchedly abused it."

" Remembering always my mispent life, I cry
 " out: Such was my life; was this to live, my
 " God? *St. Aug. Conf. l. 3. c. 2.* It shall be my em-
 " ploy to bewail and make amends for it: I will
 " draw from all objects, salutary rivers of tears,
 " and bitter regret. Ah! I have often wept for
 " passions, often for the world: have I no tears for
 " God? Tears are no where else so just; no where
 " else profitable. Here they are the necessary,
 " the saving tribute of penitence. In all other
 " occasions they are to be checked and moderated;
 " but here they ought to be indulged. Why do I
 " not water with these my bed, chamber, table,
 " garden and all places wherever I go? Why do
 " not I interrupt by them my sleep, my studies, my
 " labours, and all my occupations, and make all
 " creatures witnesses of them? Every thing I can
 " see or think of is a bitter reproach of my guilt
 " to my heart. God I have offended; the angels
 " I have grieved; the Church I have scandalized;
 " the devils I have furnished triumphs of malice

* *Whatever could sound, his own fault occurs to his mind: what-
 ever could be said or read, he applies to himself: whatever he could
 hear, he imagined himself reproached with his guilt. If he eats, if he
 thinks, if he prays, his own fall is always before his eye: it every
 moment strikes and afflicts his breast, and never suffers him to be at
 ease, or to forget it. St. Ambrose, Apoc. 1. David, c. 19. He
 mourned and wept prostrate on the ground, he fasted, he prayed, he pub-
 lishing his grief to all after ages, transmitted the testimony of his con-
 fession to the latest posterity. ib, c. 2.*

" to;

" to; the heavens I have shut against me; hell is
 " the place I have deserved, and its fiends ought,
 " in justice, to be my horrible company; all
 " creatures ought to raise their voice and arm them-
 " selves against me. Why do not I hide my face
 " with confusion, in the sentiments of my heart, be-
 " fore every thing, only crying for mercy? Thus
 " David lived after his sin, as *St. Ambrose* elegantly
 " observes, *Apoc. l. c. 91. David.*"

Penance is, *thirdly*, necessary, as it is the most in-
 dispensible and most powerful preservative against
 all sin. This virtue alone, makes the soul always
 fearful and watchful, and nourishes a constant ha-
 tred and dread of all sin, and the occasions of it.
 Without its continual pruning care, secret passions
 are easily engendered, and in a short time, make
 great havock in a heart. Hence, the most innocent
 are obliged, with *St. John Baptist*, to live in the con-
 tinual practice of this virtue of penance, and we see
 the greatest saints, and those whose innocence was
 the most remarkable, all led most penitential lives.
 The greater their horror of sin was, the greater
 was their fear of the least shadow of it in them-
 selves, and their fervour in the use of this most so-
 vereign antidote against it.

11. All men are also bound to lead penitential
 lives, by an express positive command of God fre-
 quently inculcated by him; though original sin be
 entirely remitted by baptism, both as to the guilt,
 and as to the whole punishment due to it; whence
 this proposition is condemned by *Pope Alexander*
VIII. No. 19. anno Dom. 1690. A man ought to do
penance his whole life for original sin. Yet almighty
 God pronounced this sentence on man, in punish-
 ment of that disobedience, that he should forfeit
 the happy state in which he was created in original
 justice, and should live in conflicts and labour, for
 his trial and patience. He has therefore imposed
 a general penance on all the children of Adam,
 com-

commanding them to labour. *Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow. Gen. iii. 19.* No man is here excepted. Kings, great ones, the rich, the weak, the poor, sick and healthy, old and young, all are sentenced to apply themselves in a laborious manner. The king, for example, to the government of his dominions, and this by a personal service and attention to it, which is a great slavery: the gentleman to the care of his family and estate, and all in the management of their affairs. If small intervals of necessary relaxation be allowed in all states, nevertheless those who spend the chief part of their time in superfluous dressing, sloth, circles of pleasures and pastimes, and visits not upon motives of duty and charity, or the like, are certainly very far from this spirit and practice of a laborious penance, so necessary to a virtuous life, so severely enjoined by God to all men. Another part of the general penance laid by God on all men is, that they suffer in patience all the miseries this life is subjected to, in punishment of sin, our banishment from heaven, sicknesses, crosses, the painful struggles against the passions, resistance of temptations, and lastly death, to which we all stand condemned as criminals to the divine justice, and which we ought daily to accept in spirit and offer to God, in the dispositions of resignation and satisfaction.

12. This virtue of penance is more particularly enjoined us, by the most express command of God, and particularly of Christ in the new law. We may, in some sense, reduce this to one lesson of penance. All the instructions of the gospel and prophets, and of all God's ministers in all ages; the exhortations of the prophets; all God's promises, threats, and pressing invitations to men, by their mouths, tend only to call men to this. The great precursor of the world's Redeemer, who came to prepare men to receive him, was nothing but a voice summoning all to repent, or a trumpet sounding

ing this precept in their ears. *Bring forth fruit worthy of penance.* Matt. iii. 8. His very penitential words, his frightful wilderness, his austere life and example, announced to the world, still in a more pathetic manner than his words, that he was sent by God only as the great Doctor of penance. Christ himself opened his divine ministry with this same lesson: *Jesus began to preach and to say: Do penance; for the kingdom of God is at hand;* Mat. iv. 17. and all his preachings and instructions in his whole mission, are epitomized in this: *Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish.* Luke xiii. 3.

The Apostles travelled over the world to announce to all men this same precept of penance, together with faith in Christ. They cried out through all kingdoms, towns and villages wherever they passed, as the great heralds of heaven. *God now declareth unto men, that all should, every where, do penance.* Acts xvii. 30. Observe how universal the terms are, all men, without any exception, and wheresoever they lived, whatsoever was their profession, and whatsoever the state of their soul. This same great errand upon which God sent *Jonas* to the *Ninivites*, all his prophets to the Jews, and his apostles to the whole earth, is still what he never ceases to publish by his ministers, who are equally the ambassadors of the most High God. This same voice which echoed, by the Baptist's trumpet, on the banks of the Jordan, and converted so many Jews, daily sounds in our ears from the same authority and summons. Wo to us if we are deaf to it. Such a hardness of heart will be to our most grievous punishment far more than it was to the world, in the preaching of *Noe* before the flood, to the *Sodomites* in the time of *Lot*, and to the impenitent *Jews* in the time of *Jeremy*, and in that of the *Baptist*.

13. When

13. When then does this virtue of penance oblige me? During the whole course of my life. By repenting once, I must not think I have done with this exercise. This is a debt I must always continue paying till death. Thus I shall acquit myself of this obligation, and shall deserve to find mercy, when I shall have persevered suing for it to the end of my course. Without this constancy I shall be in danger of forfeiting again the advantages of the grace received in my conversion. They were conferred upon me, on the condition that I should ever remember myself a penitent, and always live in the spirit and practice of this virtue. This the very dispositions of sincere penitence, my own frailty, danger and daily venial sins oblige me to. This the law of God enjoins me. This is the particular precept of Christ to all his followers. To encourage me to it, he who was innocence and sanctity itself, did not disdain to become my model. He was, for my example, and to appease the justice of his Father, offended by my sins, during the whole course of his mortality, a God penitent, wholly occupied in expiating my crimes. I am to be a penitent: for to be a follower of Christ, and to be a penitent, is one and the same thing. A Christian is well defined by *Tertullian*: *One born to penance*.*

A particular act of the virtue of penance is of precept; *First*, In the article of death. *Secondly*, When any violent temptation urges, which cannot be overcome without this remedy. *Thirdly*, After a man is fallen into mortal sin, so that it be not considerably deferred. *Fourthly*, Whenever a man approaches the sacrament of penance, or one, after the age of discretion, that of baptism. It is also a part of the best preparation to all the other sacraments, especially Extreme Unction, and necessary before any of them after mortal sin, or a reasonable doubt of its guilt. *Lastly*, It is of precept that acts

* Animal ad pœnitentiam natum.

of it be repeated from time to time. All truly serious Christians will be careful to perform an act of it every night, in their evening examen; when they assist at the great propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass; when they perform their sacramental penance enjoined them in confession; when they repeat the fifth petition of our Lord's prayer, the excellent penitential aspirations of the psalms or other devotions; under crosses and sufferings, which we ought to accept and offer to God in a spirit of penance; likewise proper occasions of it occur in almost all actions of life.

A delay of repentance after mortal sin for any considerable time, and above all other crimes, final impenitence, are grievous sins against this virtue, as well as against the charity which a man owes both to God and to his own soul. It is to be expressly confessed, if the sinner made an explicit act of this delay, for how long, and how often he reiterated such an act: also how long the repentance was actually put off.

14. Having considered the necessity of the holy virtue of penance, we are next to admire its efficacy and dignity. To understand which we must reflect how extraordinary a mercy the pardon of any sin is. It is in this sense, the greatest of all graces, that it is bestowed on one the most unworthy of all graces; on one who is actually an enemy of God, an object of his holy hatred and abomination, and in a state incapable of performing the least action deserving, I say, not so great a favour, but even the lowest disposition towards it. So immense is the heavy guilt and debt of sin, that all the endeavours of all creatures possible could never satisfy or make a reparation of it; nothing less than the infinite price of the blood and sufferings of a God, could do it. All sacrifices, prayers, austerities and sufferings of creatures would be insufficient. *It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats, sins*
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should

should be taken away. Heb. x. 4. A God made man died on an ignominious and cruel cross, to procure to holy penance this most wonderful virtue. This was the great fruits of his sacred incarnation and death. All he did and suffered in it, was to expiate and destroy sin, and reconcile sinners to his eternal Father. And holy penance is that virtue, that extraordinary means, which has received from his bloody sacrifice, the power of so great and so happy an effect. By penance, exalted by its merits, and containing its infinite propitiation, the sinner is able to restore to God the honour of which he has robbed him by sin, to repair the injury he has committed against him, recover his grace, and shut the gates of hell. Can we ever cease one moment extolling the infinite mercy of God, of which this is the rich depository? Why do not all sinners hasten to so powerful and precious a salvation?

15. Such is its efficacy that there can be no sin, of ever so black a dye, though it were to centre in itself the malice of all sins possible to be committed by men and devils; nay, nor any number of such sins, which it is not able to blot out in a moment. *Judas* in betraying his divine master, with the most perfect knowledge, and after having received from him the highest graces and favours, and then closing this crime with despair, committed certainly the greatest of sins; yet had he but cried out once in his heart in true repentance for pardon, the very same instant, his crimes would have been all blotted out.

The sacred death of Christ being a superabundant propitiation for all sins, and penance being the instrument of its merits, the power of this virtue must be as extended as is the efficacy of Christ's blood, which is infinite, and a satisfaction infinitely surpassing all sins possible. Nor does fire consume so rapidly and so soon a dry thread of flax, as true penance blots out the most enormous and most numerous

merous

merous offences. *If your sins should be as crimson, says almighty God, they shall be whitened as snow; and if they are red as the deepest scarlet, they shall be made white as wool. Isa. i. 18. If the impious man shall have done penance from all his sins which he has done—he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities. Ezech. xviii. 21, 22. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just. And he is the propitiation for our sins. 1 John xi. 1, 2.*

David had fallen into the most grievous sins of adultery and a most treacherous murder; he had judged one no way equal in his crime to be a son of death; yet he had no sooner spoke, in a true compunction of heart, those two words, *I have sinned to the Lord*; but the prophet Nathan, by God's command, and in his name, said to him, *The Lord also has taken away thy sin. 2 Reg. xii. 13. Manasses*, after a reign defiled by idolatry and all manner of crimes and scandals, was carried prisoner to *Babylon*. There repenting, some Jews say, not till already thrown into a brazen bull, and placed over a slow fire, he found immediate mercy and relief from God, and was restored also to his temporal kingdom. *2 Par. xxxiii. 13.* The good thief received faith in Christ, and the extraordinary grace of perfect repentance at his last breath only, and he deserved by it to be the first chosen to accompany Christ to heaven; becoming a standing example of the efficacy of holy penance to all ages to come. *Adam and Eve*, the first of sinners amongst men, were also the first penitents; being by this plank raised from their sin. *Sap. x. 1.* If they entailed sin upon their posterity, they set it also an example of repentance, and shewed its efficacy to us, who, notwithstanding their fall, against the *Tatianite* heretics, with the Fathers and the Roman Martyrology, honour them among *the saints*.

16. Penance not only blots out all sin, but also restores to a soul sanctifying grace, with all its rich attendants. This inestimable treasure was the most precious of God's gifts when bestowed on innocence, as it exalted creatures to a dignity, honour, glory and advantages incomprehensible and eternal, the very consideration of which ravishes us with astonishment and veneration. How great and how good is God to frame creatures to such incomprehensible blessings! But if the bestowing of this grace in a state of innocence, be so wonderful, how infinitely more is it so in a state of sin? Happy penance does this. It not only cleanses a soul which lay buried in filth, and was an obscure abominable monster, a fiend of hell, and slave of the devil; but it moreover makes her most beautiful before God, clothes her with his rich and glorious ornaments, invests her with a title to the kingdom of heaven, makes her a child of God, his spouse and temple, the object of his most holy delight, and the sister and companion of the angels. O glorious change! O astonishing effect of holy penance! The heavens rejoice at it, and the angels sing triumphant praises to God; a day of solemn triumph is celebrated by the whole court of heaven: all creatures which wept bitterly for this soul's fall, now rejoice exceedingly at her revival. Above all, the good shepherd, our merciful Redeemer, who had long sought, with the most earnest solicitude and love, this lost sheep, and has brought him home on his shoulders, in transports invites all to share in his joy, saying, Rejoice ye all with me, for I have found again the sheep that was perished. For a sinner converted gives a greater joy, in some sense, than one always just; as a general testifies a more sensible affection for a soldier who had been a coward, but now fights valiantly, than for one who was always courageous, as *St. Anselm* says, or rather *Hervæus*, in *Mat. xviii*. Not but the just is ordinarily

truly more holy and more agreeable to God; but absolutely, and innocence itself is a great and most amiable grace. But the conversion of a sinner may be called a most sensible joy, as our Saviour himself calls it a greater joy to heaven than is over ninety-nine just: nay, so great may be the fervour of repentance, as in a moment to make a sinner an eminent saint, and surpassing the most innocent. To what an extraordinary degree of sanctity, and of God's favour, did it not raise *S. Magdalen*? To what extraordinary graces, what spiritual dignities did not Christ exalt *S. Peter* after his repentance? These examples shew us, how perfectly almighty God forgets the sincere penitent's sins; never reproaches former guilt, nor retains any reserve on its account, any remembrance of it; as he says by his prophet, *And his iniquities shall be no more remembered. Ezech. xviii.*

Another privilege of penance is, the revival of all the merits of the good works of the whole life past which were lost by mortal sin. They were not annulled or destroyed by it; but only impeded to be acceptable to God. The impediment of their acceptance being removed, they recover their former virtue. Of which, God says by *Joel*, ch. xi. *I will restore to you the years which the locust and fly has eaten.* Which *S. Jerome* and the *Gloss* explain of this revival of lost merits by penance.

2. INTERIOR PENANCE.

1. Penance consists of two parts, as has been said; but the interior of contrition of the heart, is its essence and its soul. This appears from the very name and nature of repentance, as well as from God's word, and the unanimous sense of all men. According to the etymology of the name, a conversion signifies an entire change, by which a thing ceases to be what it was, and becomes what

what it was not before. So that the conversion of a sinner is a total transformation or reformation of his heart, which makes such a change in his soul, that the Scripture calls him a new man and a new creature. God destroys his old heart, and gives him a new one. *I will take from you a heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Ezech. xxvi. 38.* That is, a heart filled with sentiments of compunction, and with new thoughts, affections, desires and pursuits, quite contrary to the former. There is a great deal of difference between changing the place of one's body, and changing one's heart. He changes the place of his body when he goes into another country; but he changes his heart, who changes the affections of it. If he loves other things, and hates sovereignly what he loved before, his heart is no more what it was. *S. Ambrose (l. 2. de pœnit. p. 417, ed. ben.)* illustrates this by the example of a certain young man, who forsaking his lewd life, travels abroad, and being returned home and meeting his old concubine, she, surprized to see him take no notice of her, said, Do not you know me? I am such a one; answered, But I am no more such a one; for I am become another man. The heart of sin must be destroyed, and the heart of grace substituted in its room.

2. The modish converts of these days flatter themselves that they are true penitents, because of some change in their exterior, and in appearance; but these, whatsoever they may seem in the eyes of men, are no better than dissemblers and counterfeits in the sight of God. For penance is essentially, not a mere interruption or simple disgust of sin, or an empty displeasure at it; but a sincere hatred and sorrow, which is only the work of the heart. Whence God says, *Make to yourselves a new heart. Ezech. xviii. 31. Rend your hearts, and not your garments. Joel, xi. 13.*

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What is sin? It is a free choice and preference of the creature to God. This is formed by the will, by the heart: it is a voluntary disorder of its affections. It is then in this same heart that sin is to be destroyed. The heart alone consents to it. *He fornicated in his heart*, says our Blessed Saviour. *Mat. v. 28. Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, &c. Mat. xv. 19.* It is the criminal which is to satisfy; this seat, this author of sin is to be punished. This same heart which offended must undo its crime, and make the amends. It must offer itself the victim.

The flesh is chastised by fasting; the estate is retrenched by alms; but sin is destroyed only by contrition. God has no regard to other satisfactions and sacrifices without this. The Jews pretended to be converted, when they fasted and humbled themselves, as they said; and yet complained God did not look upon them. He told them by his prophet, that, notwithstanding this outward appearance, they were far from being converted, because the change did not reach their hearts, in which they still cherished their own wills and criminal affections. *Isa. lviii. 3.* In like manner, many Christians fancy themselves converted if they fast, give alms, pray, confess their sins, and perform the penance enjoined them; whereas they see not their hearts remain the same as ever.

But God is not to be deceived by hypocrisy and shew. Why then do we deceive ourselves, as if he regarded the outward appearance? Though we give all our substance to the poor, and kill our bodies with fasting, this will never appease God, if our hearts are not converted to him by charity, as the apostle assures us. Whatever exterior practices we perform, with whatever diligence we confess our sins, if our heart has not yet done its part, we can never enter the list of true penitents.

3. How many do we see, when they approach the sacrament of penance, extremely scrupulous in their examens, and nice in their confessions; yet not equally solicitous to bring a true contrition? Hence true penitents so rare. This made *S. Ambrose* cry out, (*l. 2. de pœnit. c. 10.*) *I have more easily found who shall have preserved his innocence unspotted, than who, after a fall, shall have done worthy penance.* This he said in an age abounding with illustrious patterns of penance, as the same saint witnesses. It is the want of a sincere contrition that fills the church with false penitents, and hell with souls. If striking the breast, or confessing, was sufficient for pardon, few Christians would be lost; but contrition and a change of heart is what constitutes a true penitent. This alone can never fail in all the other conditions, and will supply all deficiencies in them; even confession and satisfaction, if the opportunity of them be wanting; but this can be made up by nothing. Without it, all austerities and prayers that can be practised can never prevail: without it, all jubilees and indulgences are fruitless, and absolutions and sacraments only crying sacrileges. From its defect proceeds the great wreck of Christian souls; for, as few escape by a plank in a shipwreck, so few save themselves after sin by sincere penance or hearty contrition.

4. *Contrition is a sorrow of mind, and a detestation of sin committed, with a resolution of sinning no more.* It contains three acts which yet may be comprised in one word, in which the heart grieves for sin committed, with a detestation of it and of all sin, and a firm purpose of avoiding it for the time to come, with all its immediate occasions. The first part of it is, a true sorrow of the heart, consequently, not consisting merely in tears, which are often thought to lie, as *S. Bernard* says; not in looks; not a simple disgust of sin, or displeasure at it. The second part is, a detestation, that is, an abhorrence

rence and abomination of all sin. This differs from a bare sorrow; for the damned grieve for sin, without a detestation of it; and those who have never sinned, as the blessed Virgin, have an abhorrence of it, without a sorrow for having committed it: as also the blessed in heaven have, whose happy state makes them incapable of any grief. The definition adds; this sorrow is to be for sin; *i. e.* because it is an offence of God; consequently conceived for the love of him.

5. A third act implied in contrition is, a firm purpose of never more offending God by any mortal sin, or voluntary immediate occasion. When the sorrow for sin is named in repentance, this purpose of amendment for the future is generally added; as *Isa. i. 16. Cease to do ill, and learn to do well.* And this act is added in the definition of penance, by the general councils, fathers and schoolmen with *St. Thomas*. Whence many are of opinion that in an act of contrition preparatory to the sacrament, it is essential that this purpose for the future be made explicitly. And all agree this is absolutely to be done in practice, lest the sacrament should be null without it. The sorrow for the past only regards sins actually committed; but this purpose for the future must be general of avoiding all mortal sin and all immediate occasions; and it must be expressly extended to all habitual sins and their occasions; as this is a necessary means for the avoiding them. It is not sufficient, if it be only light, wavering and inconstant: it must be firm; and, as to more dangerous sins, must be extended to a consideration of the necessary and proper means for avoiding them; as for prayer for that end, mortification, or other remedies, more or less in particular, as the penitents circumstances may require. Without this care, it is impossible that a man's resolution should be thoroughly sincere and in earnest. Can he seriously fear a grievous evil,

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of which he is in great danger, who neglects to provide the means to secure himself? The penitent must not content himself here with general resolutions, which seldom have any effect, being forgot in the occasions. He must then descend into a detail of the proper means, at least as to certain chief points; and this with so much care that he may be stronger against the like dangers for the future than if he never received any wound: as a bone, which has been put out of joint, will be set by a careful surgeon so as to be made even stronger than the rest. He is not, indeed, to imagine himself more secure by his resolutions. Such a presumption would expose him to certain ruin. It is chiefly by being more fearful, diffident in himself, and solicitous in putting his resolutions in execution with great fidelity, that he will become thus stronger. *I have sworn and decreed to keep the judgments of thy justice. Ps. cxviii.*

6. This resolution must be formed with a liberal and great heart; for the penitent will receive the graces of support in proportion to its fervour. For this he must make an entire offering of himself to God, to do and suffer all things in his cause, rather than to ever again offend him. He must in the greatest dispositions of soul possible to raise himself to, cry out with *S. Paul* in his conversion, without any exception or reserve of himself, *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Acts ix. 6.* That is to say, Command, O Lord, what thou plearest. Must I separate from friends, country, and estate? My heart is ready, if thy will command it. Must I endure hunger, cold, fatigues, poverty, persecutions, chains, stripes and death? My heart is ready. The sequel of that apostles whole life demonstrates how sincere and how effectual this offering of himself was. Oh! had he many imitators of the fervour of his resolution, what happy penitents should we behold? How earnest, by penitential lives, to satisfy

satisfy the divine justice? How solicitous in the practice of all means that can be expedient to secure themselves from relapses? How fervent to advance in virtue, and how laborious to propagate God's kingdom, and promote his honour? Alas! Christians often imagine their resolutions the best in the world, whilst they find their hearts warmed with any good sentiments; yet they soon vanish like smoke, and the pretended penitents return to the vomit. Could such purposes have been perfect which so easily are forgotten? Can they who refuse to make use of the means, be thought to desire the end those means are ordained for? or, could they practise those means, and not be strengthened by them? They, indeed, do not always maintain a man to the end, and may be impaired by degrees in those who fall from their fervour; nay, some fear of a fall by a man's own frailty, is not absolutely incompatible with a sincere purpose of never relapsing; but every sudden resolution, every good spirit is not to be looked upon as perfect, or sufficient to a sincere conversion in great sinners, especially such as are usually formed by long earnest endeavours. In many it is false, like that of *Jeroboam* who acknowledged his crime; but after this did not return from his wicked way
3 Reg.

In ordinary confessions of venial sins this resolution must be expressly made, of avoiding all mortal sin whatsoever. It is most expedient also, that it be to avoid all direct consent to any venial sin, and to watch with the greatest diligence against all venial sin, even of surprize, as *S. Thomas* admonishes. 3 p. 9. 87. a. 1 ad 1.

7. The essential conditions of contrition are these four; that it be interior, supernatural, sovereign and universal. *It must be first interior, as has been said. When moved by the repentance of the heart—Thou shalt return to the Lord in thy whole heart—He*
U 2 *will*

will have mercy on thee. Deut. xxx. 1. You shall seek me, and shall find me when you shall seek me in your whole heart. Jer. xxix. 13. Thou shalt have mercy as thou shalt see his heart, because thou alone knowest the heart of all the sons of men. 2 Reg. viii. 38.

A second condition is, that it be *supernatural*. A natural attrition, or a sorrow for sin conceived on temporal or natural motives, or without the motion of grace, no ways belongs to the virtue of penance. See *S. Aug. in ps. 77. n. 20. t. 4. p. 828.* A disposition to grace and glory, as penance is most nobly, must bear a proportion with its end, and be in the same order. Contrition must therefore be excited by motives propounded by faith, and must be excited by a motion of divine grace. *No man can come to me, unless my Father draw him. John vi. 44. The Lord will give bounty, and our earth shall give its fruit. Ps. lxxxiv. 13* The bounty of his grace must visit our dry heart before it can produce its fruit.

8. A third condition of contrition is, that it be *sovereign*, or above all things. As God is the sovereign good, and to be loved with a love of preference above all things; so sin, his contrary, and the sovereign evil, is to be detested and hated above all things. Only God is able to abhor this monster as it deserves; and as God he pursues it with all the hatred of a God, with an infinite hatred; we are bound to detest and grieve for it in our souls above all other evils possible, so as to be truly so disposed as to be willing rather, were the case to happen, to undergo all manner of losses, tortures and evils, than ever to consent to any mortal sin. *Thou shalt find him, if thou shalt seek him with thy whole heart, and with all the tribulation of thy soul. Deut. iv. 29. Who will separate us from the charity of Christ, &c. Rom. viii. 35.* But it is no ways adviseable for frailer minds, easily to propose

pose to themselves particular evils, or comparisons of sin with them, as with hell-torments, &c. as these evils are more sensible, and apt to affect in a more sensible manner; so such representations of them would be exposing themselves to temptations. If they did occur, the best way is to calmly put them by, with an aspiration to God to beg his strengthening grace to rather suffer all things than ever offend him. Though such is to be the disposition of a penitent, yet he is not to be tempted by the like comparisons, says *St. Thomas*,

1 ad 2. *St. Bonaventure* gives us the same rule, in 4 dist. 10. 2. q. 1. *It is both a danger and a folly for one to ask such things of others or of himself; because this would be to put a man in a temptation: but if a sincere penitent says so from himself, we have reason to rejoice, because it is a sign of a good will.*

Nor is it necessary that this sorrow for sin be the most sensible; for sensible objects more easily affect the sensible part of the soul than those which are spiritual, though she prefer the others. We are to distinguish the motion of the will from that of the sensible appetite. A mother may be more sensibly afflicted at the loss of a babe than at that of a son already grown up, though she would rather of the two prefer the latter's life. Such indeed is the sympathy between the two faculties of the mind, that the movements of the will usually affect, at least in some degree, the sensitive faculty also, though this is not always so. Nor is a penitent, on that account alone, to be discouraged as if he wanted contrition; though he ought to make use of it as a means to humble himself, and redouble his fervor.

9. An imperfect sorrow for sin or act of repentance, is called *attrition*; that which is more perfect, *contrition*. The contrition of a hard thing, as of a stone, in Latin, signifies the entire breaking

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ing and shattering of it into dust: *attrition*, only the outward bruising of it. These words are applied, metaphorically, to the heart broken by perfect or imperfect repentance.

Attrition may be taken for any imperfect degree of penance. Its most common acceptation in writers of our present age, is, to signify a supernatural sorrow for sin, on the motives of a fear of hell, of the baseness of sin, or the loss of heaven. To fear hell more than sin, so as to be disposed rather to sin than fall into hell (were the case possible) is a grievous sin; though it is hard to say a fear is such, unless the comparison be expressly made in the will. But to hate sin for the fear of hell absolutely, is good and profitable. Certainly it is conformable to reason and virtue to fear extreme torments: and it is a wholesome effect of this fear to make a soul detest sin as the cause of such torments. Nor does such an act of detestation of sin any ways imply a design of sinning, if there were no hell. Whence, such a fear of sin is good, a gift of God, an impulse of the Holy Ghost, as the Council of Trent declares *Seff. 14. c. 4.* against Luther; and *Clement XI.* against *Quesnel*. God only threatens sinners with his punishments, to inspire them with this wholesome fear, as he expressly declares, *Exod. xx. 20.* and in many other places. And such a fear is ascribed frequently in holy writ to his grace, and prayed for by the saints. This attrition, therefore, is the commencement of true repentance, as in the *Ninivites*; it withdraws the heart from actually cleaving to sin, and disposes it to be moved to a more perfect hatred of sin, by the nobler considerations of divine love. Whether it be possible, out of this motive, to detest sin with a sovereign hatred and above all things, as some think and many deny, is noways material to justify this article of our faith. It suffices that it is a wholesome imperfect sorrow for that evil, grounded on good and just

just motives, and leads most powerfully to more perfect dispositions.

I acknowledge and praise thy infinite goodness and mercy, O Lord, in vouchsafing to break and hem in my stubborn interested heart with saving fear, at a time when you saw it obstinately insensible to all motives of your most amiable sweetness and infinite love. I embrace this powerful means to begin the great work of converting my heart to you. How many glorious saints, saved by penance, confess with *St. Augustin*, that they are indebted to this holy fear for the first motives of their happy and triumphant conversions, and the first graces which laid the foundation, and were the steps to the ladder of perfection, which they afterwards mounted so high, till it united them to you their God in bliss. Shall I neglect this first means towards a perfect conversion?

10. There is also an imperfect sorrow for sin, grounded on an inferior love of God, as he is good to us, and our happiness exceeding great which we fear to lose. This is a motive higher than the fear of hell, but still the character of a mercenary, not that of a son, nor reaching to the dignity of pure disinterested love of God for his own sake. It indeed disposes a soul to be easily enkindled by its chaste flames. For, by considering God's unspeakable goodness to her, and the bliss of his possession, and indulging her affections in the love of that mercy and happiness, and in grieving for having basely slighted and forfeited it, she will begin also to be inflamed with the love of his incomparable goodness in himself. Some great philosophers and divines*, have thought the affections of these different motives of love inseparable in practice, and that it is impossible to love God truly as good to us, without also loving him as good in him-

* Bossuet,

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self, and purely for his own sake. Though the general opinion holds this pure love of God, if in a degree above all things, (and under that degree it cannot be stiled a love of God) to be really separable from the act of loving him as our good; yet all must agree this easily leads to that, and disposes a soul to that perfect disposition of true charity.

Perfect penance is only that which is grounded upon this pure motive of the perfect love of God above all things. This, in a fervent degree, certainly justifies a sinner on the spot, and before he receives the sacrament of penance in the new law, as it did before the law of grace, witness *David*, and innumerable other scripture penitents. *Much is forgiven her, because she loved much. Luke vii. 47. Every one who loves is born of God. 1 John iv. 7. Do this and thou shalt live. Luke x. 27.* Whence *St. Augustin, Tr. 5. in ep. Joan. N. 7. T. 3. par. 2. p. 860. Love alone distinguishes the sons of God and the sons of the devil.* Where he speaks not of habitual charity, but of any simple act; for he alledges the act of love in *St. Peter*, saying, *I love thee. John xxi.* and *St. Chrysostom* speaks thus; *Hom. 7. in 2 Tim. T. 12. p. 703. As fire entering a wood, cleanses all before it; so the fervour of love, wheresoever it shall fall, takes away all evils,—where charity is present, all sins are immediately blotted out.* How earnest ought I to be in employing all means to obtain of God's mercy this extraordinary treasure of a perfect contrition for my sins?

11, The chief means to obtain the grace of a true contrition are persevering and earnest prayer, holy meditation, and the exercise of good works for this end. First, It must be fervently asked of God, as it is the free gift only of his mercy, a work entirely surpassing our endeavours, and totally supernatural. God inviting us to repent offers his grace to us, but will have us to ask it of him with
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an earnestness and perseverance suitable to the importance and dignity of the gift. We sin indeed of ourselves, but cannot repent of ourselves. *Thy perdition is from thyself; thy relief only in me*, says God. *Ose* xiii. 9. It is to him then we are to address ourselves; it is only by his grace that we have even a voice left us in our frightful miseries to cry out to him for this great mercy. Finding my soul deprived of the unction of holy compunction, I must imitate Caleb's daughter, who having received from her father a barren land for her portion, representing this to him, obtained one doubly watered above and below. *Jud.* i. 15. In like manner must my soul represent her barrenness to God. She will not fail, by persevering in fervent prayer, to obtain from him the double spirit of penance, which will make her fertile in all heavenly fruits. Repeating often, in the deepest sense of her necessities; *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*, she will at length, in the midst of her prayer, find herself stirred up to a spirit of compunction, and a thrice happy change of heart.

12. The second means is, that the sinner, after prayer, penetrate himself perfectly with the proper motives of fear and love, &c. by seriously meditating on them with fervent affections and ejaculations. Souls which live in habitual grace, and in the holy fear of God, easily stir up acts of compunction, by proposing to themselves proper motives only of love. But for general confessions, and at all times in habitual sinners, much greater and longer endeavours are required. Such ought first, for some time, perhaps some days, at leisure hours, meditate upon the last things, the enormity of sin, and other such motives; and during the rest of the day, repeat frequently to themselves the most moving aspirations of their meditations. By repeating the blows, the viper in the heart will at last be killed. After the motives of fear, or rather at different intervals

tervals at the same time, let them consider Christ bleeding for their sins. No motive is more powerful to stir up the soul to compunction than this. *No heart can be so hard as not to be softened by the meditation of Christ's passion*, says Gerson from St. Bernard. Let them also consider the benefit of God, his greatness, goodness and other perfections, with all the motives of his holy love. Proper meditations may be chosen on all these subjects, for a general confession. Or some of these motives may be seriously ruminated, as summed up in the *Garden of the Soul*, Mr. Gother, *Lewis of Granada's Memorial*, vol. 1. *Gobinet's Instructions of Youth*, vol. 2. &c. The acts must be reiterated often, that the heart may be worked at last into a perfect change. One stroke of the axe does not fell a great tree, especially if it be deeply rooted in the ground. It is a most necessary caution to all penitents, that they remember it is not enough to conceive fine thoughts, or to read over the best motives or acts of contrition in books. Contrition consists in the affections, or in the heart, not in barren thoughts which books suggest, and which are only the means by which the heart is to be moved and entirely broken. They must then be attentively pondered, and the sentiments which they inspire will be, as so many nails driven into the heart.

13. A third means to obtain contrition is the exercise of works of penance offered up for that end, such as humiliations, alms, fasts and other mortifications. This was eminently the practice of the ancient holy penitents, before they promised themselves so great a mercy from God's grace, as a true repentance after a grievous fall. According to the more ordinary dispensations of his providence, compunction is not to be found in the houses of pleasure, or amidst jollities and diversions. It is the offspring of an afflicted heart, ruminating its sins in the bitterness of its soul, and in a horror of delights. *Compunction alone makes a soul abhor purple, desire hair-cloth,*
love

love tears, fly laughter. As it is impossible that fire should be kindled in water; so is it impossible that compunction should live or be bred in delight. It is the mother of tears, these of laughter; it streightens the heart, they dissolve it, as St. Chrysostom writes, *l. de Compunct. T. 1.* Sir Thomas More, *B. 2. of Comfort, c. 7.* gives this excellent advice: *If a man cannot weep for his sins as he would, let him desire it. And according to the advice of Master Gerson, the less affliction he feeleth in the soul, the more pain, in recompence, let him put upon his body, and purge the spirit by the affliction of the flesh. He that doeth so shall find his hard heart relent into tears, and into a wholesome heaviness, and a heavenly gladness too, if he joins faithful prayer.*

A small alms given in this spirit, and for this end, many have experienced to be of wonderful efficacy. Such a liberality to Christ, in his poor members, moves his bounty to a munificent return of mercy and grace. A very holy author gives us the following example: * *I knew, says he, a sinner, who desiring to be converted, and not being able to weep as he wished, went out of his house one day, oppressed with sorrow, not knowing whither to go to seek some comfort. He found at his door a poor man whose misery seemed to him extreme. He was moved, and remembering our Lord, said, whatever was done to them was done to him, returned into his house with the poor man, threw himself at his feet, and in this humble posture said in his heart to Jesus Christ: Lord, who art here present in this poor beggar, could I give you my heart? but it is too hard: I dare not offer it to you, nor would you accept of it. Receive, however, this loaf which I give you, and change my heart. This act of humility and charity was so efficacious, that he found suddenly his heart rent with the most tender sorrow, and his eyes*

* F. Tho. of Jesus, *Suffr. c. 19. T. 1. p. 435.*

bathed in tears. God afterwards bestowed on him many signal graces.

As the affliction of the heart, by contrition, must bear a proportion with the sins, so the endeavours to obtain it, must be proportioned to this.

Various Methods of forming Acts of Contrition.

1. Imagine yourself at the very gates of hell or purgatory, as if just ready to fall into that abyss: here contemplate these horrible dungeons, frightful lakes of fire, various tortures, and hellish monsters and devils. Reflect you deserved your place in that pit long ago, and that God's justice is, perhaps, now wearied with long forbearance, just ready to precipitate you into it. With all the earnestness of your soul, cry out long to him for patience a little longer with you, and for the undeserved grace to bewail your offences and disarm his justice. Consider the damned souls, and what they suffer. See many there who were cut off immediately after their sin; many lost for one only sin; many snatched away, younger, stronger, richer, more likely to have lived longer and done penance than you are. Why are you distinguished from them by so singular a mercy? Tremble, and let this fear sink deep into your heart. Seek to recover grace by tears. Consider its uncertainty, and how easily you might have already been snatched away in sin. Only God's goodness withheld it. Admire and praise in this, God's unspeakable mercy to you; detest your base ingratitude and insensibility; now love and resolve ever faithfully to serve so gracious a God. Consider how terrible sin will make it to behold the punishment of others while you feel a consciousness of your own guilt. What criminal could see the execution of the accomplices of his treason, whilst his own guilt was equally known to the judge, and not be seized with dread?

2. Prostrate

2. Prostrate before a crucifix, humbling yourself, as much as possible, in the posture of your body, and far more in spirit, and covered with confusion under the ignominy of your guilt, consider that he who suffered this, was the eternal God, Lord and Creator of all things: that he underwent it all for you, a base worm of the earth, then in a state of sin and his enemy. Yet such was his goodness and his love for you, that to rescue you from everlasting flames, he took upon himself your crimes, and made himself the victim for you, to satisfy his Father's justice. Run over distinctly in mind all he endured, from the garden to his last breath on the cross. At each torment, contumely and insult, reproach yourself as the real author of it, upon this spotless Lamb of God, and convert your indignation and grief against your criminal heart. Penetrate in spirit into his divine soul, and consider it's most bitter anguish on the cross, crying out his Father had abandoned him without comfort, and in the garden venting itself by a bloody sweat gushing forth through every pore of his sacred body. Those streams of blood, those tears he shed, that inward extraordinary sorrow of his soul were all to lament for your sins. Can you see a God so grieve for them, and not weep for them yourself, and mingle your sorrow with his? Remember with what love under all his pains he thought continually on you, and pleaded your cause with his Father, and earnestly desired your salvation, as the fruit and recompence of all his sufferings. Dwell upon this spectacle, and the consideration of all his love, till it has softened your heart into the most feeling contrition. Weep over, and salute each wound a-part, repeating, your sins made it. With Magdalen, wash them with your tears. Address yourself in these aspirations to your Redeemer: "O loving Saviour of
" my soul, your wounds, your blood, your anguish,
your

“ your death and infinite merits are, by your
 “ goodness, made over to me: you offered them all
 “ to your eternal Father for my pardon and sal-
 “ vation. Present them to him to obtain from
 “ his mercy, the grace of a perfect contrition. He
 “ can never be deaf to such a voice, nor defer one
 “ moment the infinite favour. I am the most base
 “ and undeserving of creatures; but your interpo-
 “ sition will still procure me this great grace. You
 “ still retain the same bowels and love for me,
 “ which you had on mount Calvary: *You live al-*
 “ *ways to intercede for us: Heb. vii. 25.* Refuse me
 “ not then this fruit of your bitter sufferings. I
 “ desire to grieve for my sins with you, and upon
 “ the same most pure motive for which you so bit-
 “ terly bewailed them. I unite my contrition
 “ with your most holy sorrow. You grieved for
 “ my sins as they deserve; because you knew their
 “ malice and enormity. May your perfect sorrow
 “ supply all the imperfection and defect of mine.”

Address yourself also to the Father, begging
 that he turn his face from your sins, and look on
 the face of his Christ: that the sight of the wounds
 and bleeding sacrifice of his ever well beloved Son,
 move him to pardon your past ingratitude. Con-
 jure him with all possible earnestness, by the same
 Redeemer, in whose name he has engaged himself
 never to reject any request that should be presented
 to him, never to suffer you to offend him more,
 and to accept the sacrifice of a contrite heart,
 which you offer him for your past offences, and
 with it to make it acceptable, and to supply its in-
 finite deficiency, the sorrow and sufferings of his
 Son, an infinite and superabundant satisfaction for
 all sin.

In considering each of the other motives of con-
 trition, when the soul is worked into the greatest
 sense, horror and grief of her sin, let her then ne-
 ver fail to have recourse to the passion of Christ,

to excite her confidence and hope; and to offer it to God in reparation.

3. In the deepest humiliation of soul, weigh seriously the enormity of mortal (or venial) sin, upon the articles of those meditations above; reflect, it is the sovereign evil object of the infinite and eternal hatred of a God, the parent of hell, and of all that is monstrous in the devils, and the cause of all the miseries in the universe. Run over the dreadful havock it has made in your soul, and weep over it, *St. Ambrose* writes thus to a Virgin fallen into sin: *T. 5. p. 621. I will weeping employ the lamentations of the Prophet, and invite all to join their tears with mine. Hear only the cause of my grief, and you will judge whether my sorrow is not just.—Where shall I begin? What shall I say first and what last? Shall I mention what thou hast lost or what thou hast found. Thou wast a virgin in the paradise of God, amongst the flowers of the Church. Thou wast the spouse of Christ. Thou wast the temple of God, and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost. When I say, thou wast, so often must thou weep that thou art not now what thou wast. Thou didst shine as silver and sparkle as gold. Thou wast a bright star in the hand of God. What sudden change! What dismal catastrophe! Thou art now made the corruption of Satan, an execrable harlot, a sink of uncleanness, a filthy sty of the devil. Thy star is fallen from heaven, extinct and changed into a black coal—Vx, doubly wo to thee who hast forfeited so high things for a moment's pleasure.—How will the Holy Ghost again visit thee? He flies from all that is impure. What saint can approach thee for horror? Thou dar'st not open thy eyes to look up to any of them. When I come to mention thy crime, my mind is filled with horror, my heart fails, and my spirits faint away. A surgeon laying open a putrid ulcer, let him be never so stout, must feel his heart grow faint under the operation, when he comes to the bottom.*

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St. Chrysostom wished he could have sent a letter filled with tears to his old friend *Theodore*, fallen from the service of God, and repeated over him the lamentations of *Jeremie*, with tears much more just, as he says, for the ruin of his soul, than those were, which that Prophet had so abundantly shed over the material city of *Jerusalem*; *T. 1. 15. 35.* A mother weeps over an only dear child, snatched from her by temporal death: and shall I have no tears to bewail the much more terrible death of my only one, my immortal soul, where alone tears can be profitable; for they have the miraculous power of raising me again to my spiritual life.

4. Consider the infinite majesty, goodness and benefits of him whom you have offended. *Blossius* sums up the principal almost as follows. Each sentence is to be attentively and affectuously repeated in the heart.

My God is the King of all ages, and the Lord of supreme majesty, riches, nobility and excellency; most high, omnipotent and eternal. He created the wide heavens, the earth and all other things, visible and invisible, out of nothing, by the sole word of his will, and preserves them every moment from sinking again into nothing, and governs, directs and moves them in all their parts, without labour. He dwells in inaccessible light, whither no man can approach; yet he is all every where, and invisibly fills the whole visible world, and all its parts and every place. He sees all things most clearly, and penetrates through and through the most secret thoughts and affections of mens hearts: He knows most perfectly all things, past, present, and to come. His greatness, wisdom, dignity and glory have no bounds or end. He is infinitely holy, infinitely beautiful, infinitely sweet, infinitely pious, merciful, good and infinite in all manner of perfections. He is infinitely worthy of all praise,
love,

love and adoration from all creatures; and infinitely surpasses all. He is blessed, and super-exalted, and glorious for all ages. No creatures can comprehend the least of his attributes; all are lost in the contemplation of his boundless power, wisdom love, delights and pleasure, and every other perfection: for, though we give to them all the increases which our imagination can reach to, and multiply these never so often, we shall still be infinitely short. But what am I? a base worm of the earth, dust and ashes, poor, weak and miserable, to whom it is a great benefit to be suffered to crawl upon my fellow dust. I am of myself nothing but weakness, impotency and sin in their very abstract: and from myself, or by my own strength, am capable of nothing, and able to do nothing but sin. Moreover born in sin, a child of wrath, and an enemy of God; I came into this world, unworthy to breathe the air, to behold the light, to be borne upon the earth, or to enjoy the service of any creatures, being a just object of universal and eternal horror, contempt, enmity and punishment.

My God has been from all eternity, the most faithful, most constant and disinterested lover of me his ungrateful creature. He loved me before I was, and saw me in the abyss of nothing in which I lay buried. Out of pure gratuitous love and goodness for me from eternity, he ever thought on me with infinite complacency, affection and tenderness, entertained the greatest designs of mercy in my favour, and decreed to draw me out of my nothing, and give me this noble being, which he graciously bestowed on me in time, making me a rational creature, capable of loving, praising and enjoying him, stamping on my immortal soul his own most glorious image. And, O stupendous! O amorous, and to be ever amorously remembered—mercy! when I by sin was become his enemy, and lay under the guilt and sentence of eternal damnation,

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this High God, though he had shewn no pity on the rebel angels, was yet penetrated with an inconceivable love of me, which stopped, nay overcame and disarmed his justice. He, quite vanquished by his mercy and compassion, took upon him my nature, and becoming man, my God was made my brother in flesh. Lest I should remain disinherited from his kingdom of glory, and perish everlastingly, labouring above thirty years for me, he wrought my salvation. For my sake he poured forth his most precious blood to the last drop, and most cheerfully and with joy underwent contumelies, injuries, the utmost contempt, horrible torments and an ignominious death. So did this amiable God redeem me, and recover for me that title to happiness which, by my crimes, I had justly forfeited. Oh! What did he see in me to set such a value on me! I could have nothing in me which he could stand in need of, as he is infinite in all riches in himself, and no creature has any good thing or any perfection but what is from him, and his gratuitous gift. What then could he see in me, who was 'only filth and sin? O, how did he love me, so base and vile a creature, to do so much for me!

These benefits are common to me and other men, but not less on that account towards me: and there are others, in which God was pleased to distinguish me in particular. How did my God chuse me before others, no ways more base or undeserving, and call me to his heavenly kingdom, by so many graces, and notwithstanding my malice, ceases not still to invite, and even, as it were, compel, spur on, entice, encourage, terrify, and on every side besiege me with his graces. He would have me out of so many infidel and barbarous nations, to be born in his holy faith; out of so many countries and families, led away by heresy and schism, to be nourished in the bosom of his

his true Church; out of so many who are brought up in ignorance, to be taught his holy law; so that I am inexcusable above others, in not having kept his commandments. He washed me from the stain of original sin, by the holy laver of baptism; and from the commencement of my infancy, received me to be his adopted son and co-heir with Christ, his co-eternal and consubstantial natural Son. From my very birth he has always to this moment, preserved, protected and guarded me; and even then, when my wicked will ran away from him, he did not abandon me; but whilst I was offending him, and justly deserved to be plunged into hell for my crimes, he supported me, and gave me that breath and life, that faculty of acting, and that very movement of my body, which I most perversely abused to insult him. Moreover, dissembling so great an injury from so base a worm, he laboured, by his inspirations, to overcome my malice, and draw me to himself; neither when I, by an unheard of wickedness, stopped my ears against his voice, and continued more boldly in sin upon the encouragement of his patience and mercy, making his goodness a motive and incitement to fly in his face, did he immediately punish my insolence and so great injuries, but giving me time to do penance, still invites me to him. He also instituted the saving sacrament of penance, that if my soul should fall again and suffer shipwreck after baptism, it might have a plank yet remaining to be saved by that I might not perish. Without this great and wonderful mercy, O where would my wretched soul have now been? I cannot think of it without horror and dread. Even now her dwelling had been in the bottomless pit, in the midst of boiling furnaces of raging flames, under the most frightful torments, in everlasting darkness, endless death, and inexpressible and never ceasing anguish, with hellish scorpions and devils.

But my God and true Saviour has rescued me from all this by repeated wonderful deliverances, and by means of infinite mercy, which I can never be sufficiently astonished to consider.

Nor did he here set bounds to his benefits and mercies. All this was not sufficient to satisfy the excess of his love and bounty; but he also composed a love-potion, in which he would give me all which an Almighty God could bestow, for by his omnipotent wisdom, he invented, and, by his omnipotent power, he instituted the sacrament of the blessed eucharist, in which, under the veils of my ordinary food, he gave me his precious flesh and blood, with his soul and divinity, to incorporate himself with me, remain in me, and to make me remain always in him, and be one with him. O wonderful invention! O thrice happy, thrice glorious union of love! by which my God, not only spiritually, but also by the closest conjunction of substances, dwells in my breast, inflames and strengthens me with his divine presence, and enriches me with the effusion of all his heavenly graces; and vouchsafes himself to be my comfort and protector, lest I faint in the way. He instituted the other sacraments, by which as by so many channels, he might bestow his graces upon me, adapted to my wants and necessities.

Yet I have always been insensible and ungrateful, repaying him with evil, for so much and such continual good. When he has redeemed me from hell, and cleansed me from sin, I again enslaved myself to the devil, and subjected myself under his yoke, not forced to this, but chusing by my own free will to serve him, rather than be faithful to my God who had most mercifully broke my chains, not once, but many times. O truly, the more benefits he has heaped upon me, the more grievous sins have I most ungratefully repaid him with in return. He, when I was in open rebellion against him,

him, bore me in my heinous sins, all that time employing many ways to recall me from perdition; and when he had overcome my obstinacy and drawn me back to himself, he received me most graciously, *gratis*, forgave me my innumerable crimes, and admitted me again to his favour, truly the good Father to his prodigal Son, and endowed me with his treasures; yet I could still again revolt from him. O my soul, how canst thou consider this thy baseness; and not be ready to die with regret and confusion! Reflect further, that God's patience still waits for thy return, ready again to forget thy relapses, upon thy sincere repentance. Is not my heart ready to burst at the sight of such a goodness, and which I could, nay have so basely insulted! Every moment of my whole life has been marked with many and great benefits, both spiritual and corporal: how long and how often has he borne with my repeated infidelities and outrages? How mercifully has he forgiven them, whilst many younger, stronger, and less criminal have been abandoned by him, or cut off and buried in hell for less offences? How are they in their flames this moment, the most moving and most sensible proof of God's most distinguishing mercy to me, the most undeserving and unworthy of all creatures; the remembrance whereof melts my stony hard heart with the deepest sense of my ingratitude. Again, he has ever restrained the raging lion, whose power, malice and craft were, otherwise, an overmatch for me, and who sought continually to devour me. How many occasions of sin did he remove; how many temptations and dangers did he prevent, in which I should have otherwise fallen? Under the temptations into which I fell, how many precious victorious graces did he bestow upon me? by which he made me triumphant over my enemies, and delivered me out of their very jaws open to have swallowed me up. There is no evil, corporal
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or spiritual, no sin or depth of misery which one man can fall into, into which I might not, and should not fall, did not God ever deliver me from it by special succours, either of the order of nature, or of the supernatural order of grace. Whatever cruel tortures, disgraces, racking diseases, miserable deaths, or other corporal calamities; whatever evils of the soul in the most hardened and abandoned sinners, I imagine to myself real in any wretches that ever were in this world, or even possible in any, at the very name or thought of which I tremble, and almost sink away, would have been my own misfortune, had not a signal mercy of my God, protected me from them. To him I am indebted for all this, and for my deliverance from the pains of hell. When I consider them in detail; and reflect that I ought to be buried in them for endless eternity, how do I shudder, how do I bless and praise, with all my powers, and with all my affections, that God, whose pure goodness had rescued me from them!

On the other side, I am lost in entering into a detail of the innumerable graces and favours with which he has continually enriched, adorned, purified, strengthened, awakened, terrified, encouraged and supported me; and the sweet consolations and melting embraces of his love, with which he has often cherished and comforted me. He has ever watched and loved me as the apple of his eye. Every breath I drew, every moment he gave me, every adversity as well as prosperity which he sent me, was the effect of his love, which never ceased showering fresh benefits upon me, and which designed and excited me to turn them all to my great good. He forgets nothing that I do, hear, speak or desire to his honour and for his love; and suffers not the least good thoughts which his grace forms in me, to perish; but reserves all most faithfully with himself, to be recompensed with everlasting

lasting crowns, notwithstanding the imperfections with which I do them, never perfectly faithful to his grace. He has prepared for me his most glorious and most beautiful kingdom of delights, in which, upon the only and easy condition that I love him, (which is otherwise my most indispensable duty and my happiness,) he will give himself with all his infinite perfections and joys, to be my reward, truly exceeding great, beyond all bounds and measure. Though infinitely happy in himself, he will not be happy without me, and without the company of so vile a creature, and so base a sinner, if I only consent to love him. He has given me his own holy mother for comfortress and advocate; all the blessed spirits for my patrons and intercessors; and all the saints for examples to imitate, and to walk after in their steps, as they laboured under the same weakneses and difficulties here on earth, and I enjoy the same succours. He has committed the care of me to a most noble spirit, an angel, one of the high princes of his heavenly court, whom he has appointed to be my faithful guardian in all my steps. He himself watches over me, and ordains all things in the universe, which can directly or indirectly concern me, with as much tenderness, affection and attention for me, as if I was the only person in the world, burning with the most constant and most ardent desire of my salvation. Ah! No mother loves her only son so tenderly as my high God loves and cherishes me. His love for me is most sweet, most ardent, and truly without all bounds. But I, alas! have always been and am, ungrateful and unfaithful, rendering evil for good, and many ways destroying and hindering his gifts and graces in me, breaking my most solemn engagements, so often renewed to him, though I should be ashamed to violate my simple word given to a man in a temporal contract, and profaning what God had most solemnly consecrated and sanctified.

Recollect

Recollect in general, my soul, all the different crimes of which thou hast been guilty, and how often thou hast repeated any of them: run over all the stages and organs of thy body, and thou wilt see that all have been abused against thy God and the end of thy creation; behold thyself over-run and all covered with hideous ulcers. Consider the just and tender reproaches thy God will make thee for thy base return for each of his benefits, in particular creation, conservation, redemption, &c. which no heart can stand without being softened into tears of compunction: as drops of rain often falling, hollow the hardest stone, so repeat these reflections, in short pathetic aspirations, till thy adamant heart be quite pierced and bruised, and these two eyes be made two perpetual sources of tears. Help me, O angels of heaven, and all you glorious saints, inhabitants of paradise; particularly you blessed penitents, and my special patrons, implore this great mercy from the Father of mercies, for the most miserable of sinners. O Queen of heaven, refuge of sinners, mother of all men redeemed by Christ, obtain by your intercession, this grace for me, through the adorable blood of your divine Son, spilt for sinners. O God of pity, by the merits of your sacred passion, have pity on my folly, impiety and ingratitude, the abyss of which you alone penetrate and understand. I am unworthy even to lift up my eyes towards you, or to call for mercy: but prostrate on the ground, my heart cries to you in its deep groans in silence, not daring to employ my voice, or raise my countenance. May your ears be open to this my earnest inward cry, with which I beg that you mercifully enlighten my understanding, to see and deeply penetrate my heart; sincerely to bewail all my ingratitude: nor will I cease till I can hope, by your grace, that I have obtained this greatest of mercies.

5. The penitential psalms are the most perfect sentiments of penance with which the Holy Ghost inspired the royal penitent and prophet, to serve as a model for all penitents of succeeding ages, to form in themselves that holy spirit of penance by. In the primitive ages, the pastors of the Church recited them frequently over to penitents during their stage of canonical satisfaction, and enjoined them often to repeat them. *St. Augustin*, in his last sickness, caused them to be wrote out and hung by his bed-side, and scarce ceased to recite them with abundance of tears to his last breath. *St. Ambrose*, writing to the fallen Virgin, *ch. 10.* bids her to recite every day the 50th psalm, and to repeat continually in her heart, some moving sentences of penance, drawn from the psalms and prophets, bewailing herself with perpetual tears and fasting. The Holy Ghost will be the best master of this spirit of compunction in these holy prayers, to those whom he has truly animated with it. But, for a help to the more ignorant, a paraphrase of the *Miserere* and *De profundis* is subjoined, which may be varied as every one's devotion will easily suggest from this model, both in these and in the other psalms.

V. 1. I lie buried and rotting in the most filthy stench and sink of sin, I am quite overwhelmed with the miseries of my baseness and injustice; yet have been blind, and have not seen the evils which encompass me. Like the sinner reproached *Apoc. iii. 17.* I am miserable, and have not known it. What advantages have I lost? What a glorious state, and what high prerogatives am I fallen from? And into what a frightful abyss of miseries? How innumerable and how dreadful are the evils I groan under in my sins! How horrible are those eternal ones into which I am just ready to be plunged as the just recompence of my guilt! O most wretched condition to which I am reduced, which

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no words can express, nor all created understandings together conceive! Only an infinite God, who alone knows his own infinite perfections, can fathom the depth of my wounds, or the enormity of treasons committed by a base creature, against his adorable majesty. Angels of heaven, who penetrate as far as creatures are able to do, the frightful miseries of my soul, be moved to pity at their sight, and weep over them with me. I am still too insensible and blind under them, though I begin to have so much feeling of them as to roar, howl and tremble under them. Immortal thanks to you, my God, who have opened my eyes, have scattered those clouds which made my darkness, and have discovered to me my iniquity by a mercy promised, *Isa. xlii. 16. I will lead the blind into a way which they know not: I will put their darkness before them into light.* Miserere.

The deep feeling of my extreme miseries, makes me most earnestly to seek a remedy to them. For this I prostrate myself before your throne, O Lord of infinite majesty, whom I have most basely offended. To whom else could I have recourse but to you? I have sinned against you. My evil is so great that all creatures could never afford me the least relief: they all could never protect me, as they all are nothing before you. Moreover, as long as I remain your enemy, they all join you their Maker, arming themselves against me your rebel, ready to execute your justice upon me. To you then do I fly, who alone are able to relieve me. My condition is every way most miserable, and without you desperate; but by your only word, you can at once entirely restore me. Therefore I cast myself at the foot of your throne, but I am not able to lift up my eyes towards heaven, or to pronounce any of your sacred names, without bursting into a flood of tears. How dare I call you Father who have renounced your authority; or King, who have with-
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drawn myself from your sweet obedience, and cast off your holy law? or Judge, the remembrance of which quality overwhelms me with dread and terror? or God, which name includes all your titles and greatness in one, all which I have injured? Nevertheless, you the best of Fathers, still remember that I am the work of your hands; and though I have impiously effaced your divine image, stamped by grace and original justice on me, by which I bore a resemblance with your infinite Majesty, you yet discover the traces of it in my disfigured soul, and love me still; nor yet cease to invite me to mercy.

If I am baseness and unworthiness itself; you are mercy itself; your goodness and pity know no bounds. Where shall I hope for pity so confidently as in the fountain of pity and mercy, I therefore, prostrate before you, implore your clemency, and conjure you, by the bowels of your goodness, to have compassion on me. It is your amiable property to have mercy. Misery is the proper object of pity, as guilt is of indignation. Suffer not my heinous crimes to provoke your just anger against me; but rather may my calamities excite your tenderness. What is a more moving object to infinite goodness than extreme distress? Behold the only title on which I sue for pardon; it is not that I have any claim to it on account of any thing in me that might deserve it, but only because your goodness is infinite. Can you forget your own nature? To shew mercy is your property, your delight, and peculiarly your own work. Can you refuse to exercise it upon me? The abyss of my misery implores the abyss of your mercy. Though my iniquity and evils are extreme, your goodness is still greater, and infinitely surpasses them. Let it then be moved with compassion at them, and apply its sovereign remedy to remove and heal them. As you love my soul, you cannot behold its miseries, and not pity

me. *Have mercy on me therefore, O God, according to thy great mercy.* They who sin by ignorance or inadvertance; they who have offended in smaller points, stand in need of your ordinary mercy. I have sinned by malice, and cannot be relieved without your great mercy. The justification of any sinner is a greater work than the creation of the universe. I am a relapsed, perfidious, ungrateful, base and sacrilegious sinner; and cannot be delivered but by an effect of your highest mercy. I have multiplied sins beyond the number of the hairs of my head; I have offended you by all my members and faculties. I have broke not one, but by some offence or other, all your holy laws, trespassing in each of all my duties to you, and adding every day of my life, since I have been capable of sinning, some new transgressions. I therefore beg your compassion according to your great mercy.

V. 2. And according to the multitude of your commiserations. My numberless and complicated crimes cannot be washed away without innumerable mercies. But how often soever I may have offended, you have infinitely more mercies, as they are inexhaustible. You are able to pardon, not only seventy-seven or a thousand times, but as often as any creature can have offended, if he sincerely return to you with a proportioned repentance: for your mercy is not confined by either number or bounds. You are also rich in the multitude of your mercies, which you have shewn to innumerable penitent sinners; nor are they by this in the least impaired. You exercised them on all whoever sincerely implored them. All the saints have been saved only by them. Your clemency does not suffer by the multitude of its acts, but ardently seeks penitent souls to save them. You have mercies reserved for me, and have given me most assured pledges hereof; though my sins are most grievous,
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without number, my comfort is this multitude of your mercies. I then have recourse to you with confidence, sensible, indeed, of the depth of my wounds, but placing all my hope in your inexhaustible source of goodness, and earnestly conjuring it, by your bowels of compassion, that you blot out my iniquity.

V. 3. I am become a loathsome nest of filth and stench, altogether insupportable in your divine eye, and even to myself. Wash me, O Lord: you alone can cleanse my soul. Should I bathe myself every day and night in floods of my tears and blood; should I undergo, in a spirit of penance, all that martyrs, confessors or holy solitaries have ever gone through for your glory, and have all the angels, saints and men on earth, associates of my endeavours and labours, I could never wash off the stain of the least venial sin. Your precious blood, O God, is the only bath that can purify me. You alone can make me clean. Cleanse me then, O merciful Lord. Behold I sigh before you, because my wounds are putrified and filled with stench. *I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly, Ps.*

I roar out from the groaning of my heart. O Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my sighing is not hid from thee. My heart is disturbed within me; my strength has forsaken me, and even the light of my eyes is not with me. Why therefore, O Lord, do you not blot out my iniquity? Ps.

You have, I hope, washed me already; but not enough, I fear, to remove all the remains of my sin. Wash me again and again: cleanse me entirely. Touch my heart; give me a bath of my tears, flowing from the most perfect compunction, equal to the enormity of my sins: let these never cease to wash me more and more by the virtue of your adorable blood.

V. 4. I know, confess, condemn and bewail my guilt. Arise then, O Lord, according to your holy engagement and law, or promise to penitent sinners, and

and remit my offences. I was long in darkness; I was blind, and loved my blindness. I was in sin; heaven was incensed against me; you was my enemy; hell was ready to swallow me up; yet I could laugh and sleep; such was my insensibility. But you have now opened my eyes. I see all my misery and heinous guilt. My sin stands always against me, ever stinging my conscience, and cruelly reproaching me.

V. 5 I see clearly and confess with bitter regret and shame, that by my sin I lifted up my hand against you, though, alas! I did not then consider it: yes, against you, a God who had created me, and who held my life in your hand: O felony! against a God who had redeemed me from hell, and given me the life of grace by dying for me. O ingratitude against a God who loved me from eternity, and heaped innumerable, inestimable benefits upon me. O baseness! against a God, to whom I had vowed fidelity in baptism. O perfidiousness! against a God who that moment could throw me, body and soul, into hell. O insensibility! I sinned against you, my God, whom I ought by all titles to have served, feared and loved with my whole heart, soul, and strength! O blindness! O sacrilege!

So far did I carry my indolence and malice, as to sin against you in your very presence, and to do evil before those very eyes, which cannot bear to behold any iniquity. For wherever I went, in whatever caverns I hid myself, I was always in your presence, your eyes always beheld me. And though I feared the sight of men, I boldly feared not yours, but disobeyed and insulted you to your face.

I have sinned against you alone, and it is only your offence that I consider and so grievously regret. I have scandalized and injured men; but even then I offended you for whose sake I was bound

bound to love them. And the offence of your infinite Majesty is so enormous, that the rest all disappears. For the remedy of this evil, what shall I do? To whom shall I fly? Only to you yourself, my God: for who else could heal me? And who is so good, so merciful, so full of compassion? You came from heaven to call sinners: you died to draw them to you; you invite them that are burdened, and engage yourself to ease and relieve them. Behold I come loaden, weighed down under my sins: remove my heavy burden: overcome my malice by your mercy. Thus will you overcome in fidelity to your promises of mercy to sinners, when your sweet providence shall be considered and judged by men, most true, faithful and merciful, as it is.

V. 6. O tender Samaritan, look on my frightful condition, pity my miseries, and heal my wounds. I was even conceived in original sin, and from it draw concupiscence, weakness, and a proneness and inclination to evil; which, unhappily, I have not subdued, but enslaved myself to, and thus plunged my immortal soul into my present abyss of miseries, so much deserving tears.

V. 7. Deliver me, because you love truth, and cannot violate your divine word. You always most faithfully observed your sacred promises to *Noë*, *Abraham*, the other patriarchs, the *Jews*, sinners and all men, and are incapable of ever failing in any tittle of them, because you are the lover of truth. As you have promised pardon to all sincere penitents, you could never reject any sinner returning to you, nor can you reject me, if by your grace I truly implore your mercy. Touch my heart with a perfect repentance, and then receive me to pardon according to your word, for you are ever faithful to it on your side. But you love truth also in me, i. e. sincere repentance. Give me such a one.

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You have revealed to me the hidden mysteries of your wisdom. Have you given me this divine knowledge of your faith and most wonderful redemption by your Son, that it should be fruitless in me? No. Your desire is that I partake of its fruits. The wise men of the world knew not these saving truths: the curious searchers of nature pried above the heavens, and carried their eyes on every side; but could never find out these mysteries of your wisdom. Yet you have revealed them to the little ones, and among them to me. But do I know them in vain, or not to be saved by them? Thus they would only aggravate my miseries. Avert such an evil for your infinite mercy's sake. Your calling me to your faith, and manifesting your saving truths to me is a pledge of your singular predilection for me. Compleat your mercy towards me, and restore me to your favour, by the pardon of my offences.

V. 8. Sprinkle me, O Lord, not with hyssop dipped in the blood of goats and oxen, the weak sacrifices of the old law, unable to cleanse my sinful soul, but with the blood of your Son, the immaculate Lamb, who offered himself a bleeding victim for me. All the saints have their robes whitened only by this; all were cleansed by this holy flood. I am indeed more defiled; but it is of infinite virtue, and can perfectly cleanse me, though my sins were never so numerous and enormous. Wash then my soul here, and I shall be cleansed and made whiter than snow.

V. 9. What a joy will it be to my bruised heart under my terrors, and amidst my fears, to hear that word of sweetness from your divine mouth: *Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace. Thy chains are loosed: the heavens are again opened to thee.* How will my poor bones, broken with sorrow, exult and rejoice at that sentence of comfort. But Oh! still

Still more shall I triumph and be overwhelmed with joy at your tribunal, and in everlasting glory! How shall I for ever bless my penance, my grief, my tears, which shall have purified me on earth, and purchased me so immense a glory! How shall I eternally sing in overflowing jubilation of heart, Happy, thrice happy penance, which has shut the gates of hell, and procured me this so great, so perfect a bliss!

V. 10. How should I not weep and do penance, by this means to disarm thy justice? I see your infinite indignation kindled against me for my sins. I feel your just anger over me as a raging sea swollen ready to swallow me up: as a high mountain ready to fall on me and crush me: as a thunder ready to reduce me to ashes. A mortal dread seizes my heart. Ashes and tears are my food. I roar through the excess of fear and grief, and cry out with a devout penitent soul*, *Lord Jesus Christ, future judge of the world, I a guilty criminal considering the terrors of your tribunal, trembling I cry out to you: Lord, reprove me not in your fury, nor chastise me in your wrath.* Ps. vi. 1. *Wo to me! How could I insolently provoke your immense clemency to fury, and your infinite mercy to anger! I have justly deserved your indignation: I confess it trembling. But this fury is not in you and in your affection; but out of you, and in your actions and effects: for you are always the same.* Ps. ci. 28. In your fury, you are calm within yourself. Your fury is the torments of hell; your anger the pains of purgatory, in which you chastise to save. I pray to be delivered from both. But by what means? Upon what do I rely? Upon what do I build my hopes? Not on my justice or deserts; but purely on your mercy. Have mercy on me because I am infirm. I alledge nothing

* Gerson in Ps. Pœnit. Mod. 1. T. 4. p. 6.

but my sickness and wounds, and your omnipotence and clemency. I am sick; you are my physician. Heal me therefore. Here apply what remedies it shall please you. Here cut; here burn; only deliver me from your fury, from the severity of your justice in the world to come. O compassionate tender physician, heal me, for all my bones are disturbed. I have laboured in my groaning; I will wash my bed every night with my tears. In this affliction of heart, I will never cease to cry out to you, with all the earnestness of my broken heart. Turn away your eyes from my sins. I ask not that you turn away your eyes from me: this would be to be abandoned by you. As in the order of nature I only subsist by your eyes being fixed on me; so neither in the order of grace. But I fear your eyes being fixed on my sins. Blot them out therefore; as you cannot but see them as long as they remain. I dread your attention to my guilt, and with tears and earnestness reiterate my prayer: blot out my offences by the sponge of your infinite mercy. But I hope for this inestimable grace only by humble assiduous prayer and works of penance. These shall be my constant study and endeavours.

V. 11. My heart is defiled and corrupted; depraved, sick, languishing, and abandoned to the tyranny of its passions and irregular affections and desires. Cleanse and heal it: then make it love you alone, for whom only it was created. My mind is filled with vanity, false ideas of things, a foolish esteem of earthly toys, and a fear of phantoms. Drive away all illusion of my understanding; correct all the errors of my mind, deceived by self-love and the passions, and create a new right spirit in me.

V. 12. Cast me not from your face. This is the utmost, most dreadful, only misfortune. I shudder and sink away at the very thought or name of it.
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I most justly deserve it indeed, as I have abandoned you, and deserted over to your enemy's cursed banner. I have crucified my Saviour Jesus Christ, and have my hands as it were, yet red, stained with his sacred blood. Nothing is more just than that I should be cut off by you. But then I am lost and infinitely undone. Filled with terror at the thought, and with detestation of my madness and grief for my baseness, I beg, with all the earnestness of my soul, that you avert so frightful an evil. You never rejected any one who fled to you. The Cananaean woman, by persevering, at last found mercy. I throw myself at the foot of your throne, and will not cease, with tears and loud cries, to implore your pity, and begging that you rather heap upon me all temporal calamities and sufferings possible, if your justice must absolutely require it; that rather pains and rottenness consume my very bones yet alive; but that you cast me not from you; and that you take not your holy spirit away from me. It is yet with me in some degree, for, without it, I could not even now seek you. Grant it me in its plenitude, and may it dwell and reign in my heart. Deprive me not of its sweet presence: without it, I am nothing, and am utterly undone.

V. 13. Restore me the happiness of your salvation and of your love, which replenishes the soul with inconceivable joy. The very remembrance of it fills your servants with inexpressible comfort. Your spirit is also a spirit of strength. I am a poor weak reed; but strengthen me by your powerful spirit. By it I shall be invulnerable and triumphant: by it I can do all things; without it, I am nothing, and can neither rise nor stand.

V. 14. What can I do to thank your mercies. Eternity to praise you is too little. All your blessed will for ever thank and praise you with me and for me. I will labour to make all infidels and sin-

ners to know and love you ; to propagate your honour and your spiritual kingdom on earth, and to make you to reign in the hearts of all men. *Come and hear, and I will tell you what he has done to me.* *Psf. lxxiii. 13.* I will announce to all the earth the terrors of your justice, and the sweets of your love and mercy. My heart is enflamed with love and gratitude: it burns with a desire that all men may know, love and praise you.

V. 15. You are truly the God of my salvation, seeing you saved me from hell by a mystery, in contemplating which angels and men will for all eternity continually lose themselves in astonishment: for such was your boundless love of me, that you, my God, was pleased to die on a cross, in exquisite torment, loaden with obloquies and ignominies, to redeem a wretch who had incurred your most just indignation by his guilt, and deserved nothing but the eternal thunderbolts of your vengeance. O infinite goodness! O ineffable mercy and love! You then, who are the God of my salvation, save me; deliver me again from the actions of blood, *i. e.* from the crimes of which I am guilty, and by which I have profaned and trampled upon your precious blood spilt for my redemption. Shew me this second mercy, and I shall still with greater justice praise your goodness with songs of jubilation without ceasing for ever.

V. 16. I am able to do nothing without you, much less to pray in a manner agreeable to your Divine Majesty. If your grace do not touch my heart, the movement of my lips will be fruitless. Inflame then my affections, open and sanctify my lips; then my heart, burning with a desire to extol your greatness, and my mouth pronouncing your praises, my sighs, tears and homages of adoration, will be acceptable to your Majesty.

V. 17. Penetrated with the deepest sense of adoration and gratitude, I cry out: *What shall I give the*
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the Lord for all the good things he has bestowed on me.

Pf. cxv. 3. Do you desire sacrifices at my hands? With joy I offer you the sacrifice of all I am or have. My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready.

Pf. lvi. 10. O with what joy do I offer all to you, making a sacrifice of goods, honour, reputation, my own judgment, reason, interests, my body, senses, and life, to do your holy will in all things, and to accept whatsoever it shall please you to appoint or send me. Exterior sacrifices you will not accept. It is myself, it is my heart you demand. Son, give me thy heart, you say. I tender it to you, a heart dilated with desires to praise you, full of gratitude, ready to receive all things from your holy will, and to undergo and do all things for your honour. O with what joy do I thus sacrifice my heart to your adorable greatness!

V. 18. But it must be a bruised heart, broken with sorrow, filled with bitterness for my iniquities. Make mine such; then you cannot but accept it. I fear a superficial repentance which does not change the heart. This I know you abhor. Make mine sincere and perfect. I join it with the victim of the immaculate Lamb, your Son; but even that will not profit me, unless it be accompanied with that of my own heart. If I offer this, contrite and humbled, you will not despise my sacrifice. To make my offering such, I will weep, mourn and sigh here below, without intermission. This shall be my ordinary and dearest exercise; my delight and my portion. If to be miserable is enough to make any creature weep, what misery was ever equal to mine? O tears, O groans, you cannot be better employed than to avert this great evil.

V. 19. I burn with a desire that my soul be established in grace. Also that for your honour, your holy Church may triumph and be dilated. It is torn by infidels and heretics; and disfigured by sinners.

ners. May your kingdom flourish, and the knowledge of your holy name and love of your goodness reign in all hearts.

V. 20. Then sacrifices of praise and thanks shall always burn to you on the altar of my heart, and likewise over your whole Church on earth as in heaven.

Psalm cxxix. De profundis.

Verse 1. From the abyfs in which I lie, from the depth of my miseries I have cried out aloud to you, O Lord. No abyfs can be more horrible than that of sin in which I am plunged. I raise out of it my eyes and my heart towards you, O Source of mercy and comfort. Let my voice, notwithstanding my immense distance, penetrate to your ears, hear my prayer, I most earnestly conjure you. I ask not riches, worldly greatness or pleasure: I implore your pardon, mercy and grace, my only good, in comparison of which all other goods are evils. I ask indeed, a great thing, a favour above all value, and of which I am most unworthy. But you are great, and your bounty and mercy are boundless; and he injures you who only asks of your Majesty trifles and foolish earthly things.

V. 2. Shortly in hell I should cry in vain for all eternity. I now redouble the ardour of my cries whilst time is. Hear my most earnest supplications, which I send forth from the bottom of my gulph.

V. 3. Terrified at the sight of the hideous armies of my sins, multiplied beyond the number of the hairs of my head, and of the horrible corruption of my heart, I cry out, trembling with fear; with tears and a heart full of bitterness, beseeching you not to look on my iniquities, but on your infinite mercies. If you treat sin with rigour, no one can stand in your presence. All the saints are only

only saved by your mercy. They all cry out with one voice: Not to us, O Lord; not to us; but to thy name give glory. How much less am I able to stand your search, being all defiled, and made up, as it were, of iniquity.

V. 4. All my hope and confidence is in your goodness: for, though I am all unworthiness, you are all mercy. You have a fund of infinite goodness and propitiation, and are both able and desirous still to pardon and save me. You have even bound yourself to shew mercy to penitents by your holy law, which is an alliance of mercy. This is to me the sure grounds of the most firm hope.

V. 5. My soul has hoped in your divine promises, as your word is truth itself, and cannot fail. She has hoped, and continues always to comfort herself in your goodness, and in the riches of your mercy, which are inexhaustible.

V. 6. From the morning, or the first moment of my conversion to the end of my life, amidst all temptations and dangers, I will ever hope in the Lord. His goodness and clemency is my immoveable anchor, which nothing can shake. Let his Church, with all his servants, ever hope in him.

V. 7. Because with the Lord, there is a boundless ocean of mercy, and a superabundant redemption, surpassing even all the impiety of sinners possible. How sweet is it to a soul which has offended you, and deserves to be crushed by ten thousand thunderbolts of your justice and anger, to read that *you are full of mercy*, that mercy is in your heart as in its centre. O sacred plenitude! O amiable abundance! O inestimable riches! If *Cain* had truly known you, he could never have said; my sin is too great to be pardoned. If *Judas* had considered your desire to forgive, he could never have lost hope. Far from me such an unhappiness. I know your mercy is infinite, and that it is your favourite

yourite attribute, and your delight is to exercise it. You even died to redeem me, and purchase me a pardon. I will then knock at the door of your amorous merciful heart, and cry: Consider not the provocations of my malice; but your ordinary mercy. You came and suffered death to save sinners. Save me then.

V. 8. David foretold your plentiful redemption of us from all our sins. I see it accomplished. Let me not perish after being so wonderfully redeemed. O God, having given your Son a propitiation for me, look on that agreeable victim, and pardon me.

A purpose of satisfaction for sin, by a penitential life, in the form of an appeal from the tribunal of God's justice to that of his mercy. From GERSON, T. 3. p. 700.

I the most ungrateful of all God's children, unworthy to bear that sacred name, the most poor in all merits, and the most full in sin, prostrate myself before the throne of his adorable Majesty, with a firm resolution to punish my crimes in myself, that I may avert his just vengeance which I deserve. I see your infinite justice, O Lord, armed against me, and the torments of hell prepared for me. I remember the sins, by which I have insulted thy grace, despised thy law, trampled upon, and profaned thy precious blood, and after repentance, again returned to the vomit, with perfect knowledge, and a thousand circumstances aggravating the malice of my guilt. I am fallen into the hands of the living God, and separated from the society of the saints. Yet you, O powerful great King, terrible Revenger and just Judge, have borne me in patience, and expected my return that you might have mercy on me. I have prolonged my iniquity, and you have continued your mercy, dissembling my

my treasons, crimes and ingrati- tudes, and not dealing with me according to my offences, but suspending by your mercy, the execution of the sentence I have long ago incurred. It is only by your clemency that I do not feel, and for eternity, the torments of the never dying worm, the piercing flames of hell, and the loss of your enjoyment and of my heavenly inheritance. If you were now to mount your tribunal to sit upon me, I faint away with fear. Lord, what would my lot be? Therefore, O just Judge, by this bond written with my tears, I beseech you to receive my earnest supplication, and humbly make an appeal from the tribunal of your justice to that of your mercy. I intreat you, O Queen of mercy, and refuge of sinners, and all ye saints and blessed spirits, earnestly to intercede for me.—Again, O God, who art rich in mercy, whose mercies have filled the earth, and surpass all your other works, and who have promised mercy to all sinners that shall sigh and repent sincerely, I again and again beg that you grant me mercy and pardon. I firmly purpose, by your assistance, to correct my life, avoid all occasions and dangers of sin, and labour to satisfy your justice by penitential works. And I will often renew afresh, this my resolution, that I may the more vigorously put it in execution, with constancy and unwearied perseverance. I, from my heart, remit all injuries, and forgive all my enemies, begging that you mercifully forgive me my immense debts, according to your word. O crucified Son of God, who, on your cross, was heard for your reverence, when you prayed for us, offer your prayer and passion to your Father for me, to appease his indignation, and disarm his justice. May I find mercy through your sacred wounds and death.

The soul may represent to herself God receiving her appeal, and returning an answer to this purport. By my clemency I allow and admit your

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appeal, and refer your cause to the tribunal of my mercy, assigning for your peremptory term to prosecute here and make good your cause, by a penitential course, all the remaining days of your life, and I propitiously suspend the sentence of my justice pronounced against you; but upon this condition that you labour in acquitting the debts with which you stand charged to me.

The protestation of the soul, recommended by *St. Francis of Sales*, is an excellent purpose of amendment of life. See *Garden of the Soul*, p. 237. *Gerson* testifies that he found it of singular efficacy to oblige penitents, especially young persons, firmly to promise to him, by a renovation of their baptismal engagements, not to return to such a sin, or any other again. *l. de Remed contra peccat.*

A short Act of Contrition for a Soul already sufficiently moved to Compunction.

O God of infinite goodness, I vile worm have insulted your tremendous Majesty, despised your love, abused your inestimable benefits, and violated your sacred laws; yet you love me still, and invite me to return to you. I am pierced to the heart with the most bitter sorrow, for having ever offended you, because you are infinitely good; I detest all sin above all other evils, and am firmly resolved by your grace, to avoid all sin, and all occasions of it, especially *N. N.* those which seem more dangerous to me.

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O dearest crucified Redeemer, it grieves me most bitterly that I have ever injured you. I hate and detest sin, the sovereign evil, with a sovereign abhorrence. Ah! unite my sorrow with your divine grief in the garden; touch my hard heart, make my eyes stream in floods of tears, and wash my soul in your precious blood, which alone is able

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to wipe away its stains. Strengthen me by your grace that I never more offend you; and preserve me from all dangers, which I will fly with the utmost care and dread.

D I S C O U R S E XVI.

ON EXTERIOR WORKS OF PENANCE OR SATISFACTION.

1. **T**HOUGH the essence of penance consists in the interior, or in contrition of the heart, without which all exterior austerities are but counterfeit shadows, and, as it were, a body without a soul; yet the interior alone does not constitute this virtue, which also requires exterior works, as its fruit and essential complement. Neither penance nor the practice of it is scarce ever named in holy scripture, without express mention of exterior austerities as making up a part of it; for example, fasting, sack-cloth, ashes, &c. This we find in the repentance of the *Ninivites*, in that of *David*, in that of the *Jews*, as often as they ever pretended to return from sin to God. This, Almighty God and his prophets every where enjoin and exhort true penitents to. As *Daniel* gave that counsel to *Nabuchodonosor*, *Redeem thy sins with alms*; *Dan. iv.*

24. The heretics who confine penance all to the interior alone, excluding all works of satisfaction, invent a new kind, entirely unknown in scripture and in ancient penitents. Those Catholics who totally neglect the practice of the exterior, adopt that maxim in their conduct, which they condemn in their faith.

2. God could remit all sin, without requiring any satisfaction, as he does in baptism, by which all sins committed before it are so blotted out, that there

remains no satisfaction due for them, nor any temporal punishment, as has been the constant tradition of the Church. *Rom. viii. 1.* *There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* But the perfidiousness and sacrilege of those who relapse, after having received the inestimable benefit of sanctifying grace, makes the case of such sinners very different: God mercifully admits them again to a free pardon, upon their sincere repentance; but on this condition, that by a voluntary chastising of sin in themselves, they make some atonement to his injured justice; in which, if they are too slothful, he reserves to himself to inflict on them some temporal punishment either in this life, or in purgatory in the world to come. This article of our faith is clear, from the perpetual practice and tradition of the Church, from the very idea of penance, which is given us in the holy scriptures, and from the clearest examples and passages contained in it. This we see in holy *David*. His sin is declared forgiven him: *2 Reg. xii. 13.* Yet the prophet adds in the same place, that it should be punished with the death of the child, and that on its account, blood should not depart from his house, *ib. v. 10.* Nor could his tears avert the execution of the threat. Again, after his sin, in numbering his people, was forgiven him, the choice of a punishment was left to him; whether war, famine or pestilence. *2 Reg. xxiv.* Also, the *Israelites* murmur in the desert was pardoned them, *Num. xiv. 20.* yet God adds in the very same place, that for it all of them should die in the wilderness, except *Josue* and *Caleb*. *Moses* and *Aaron* were certainly received into God's favour, after their sin in not glorifying God at the rock; nevertheless, both are condemned to die, without seeing the land of promise, on account thereof; as we read of *Aaron*, *Numb. xx. 24.* of *Moses*, *Deut. xxxii. 1.* A prophet was killed by a lion, in his journey, in punishment of a disobedience,

bedience, who yet is described as a saint, and his death as precious in the sight of God. 3 Reg. xiii.

3. All the satisfaction of creatures could never expiate any one sin. Only Christ could repair the injury it offered to God. This he did by a superabundant satisfaction for us. All remission of sin, or of any punishment due to it, is a gratuitous mercy of God's pure grace, and the fruit of Christ's sacred passion. Still it requires certain conditions on our side, as a sincere repentance and contrition, and also some satisfaction. It belongs to the Giver of a grace or favour to prescribe the conditions, under which he bestows it, as God is pleased to do in penance. This hinders not the pardon from being a purely gratuitous mercy, as our satisfaction is no ways adequate towards compensating the injury of sin, nor would it be of any virtue, unless by God's gracious acceptance, the promise of which is purely gratuitous; nor is any way derogatory to the merits of Christ, as it is not required to supply a deficiency in them, which are infinite and superabundant, but as a condition stipulated before this fruit of them should be imparted to a sinner. Christ did not so suffer for him that he should be wholly exempt from doing any thing for himself. He will have him to undergo some voluntary chastisement on his side; which yet does not efface any of the sin by itself, it being no more than a condition upon which the merits of Christ's blood is communicated to us, without which no remission can be. Of this satisfaction St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ix. 37. *I fulfill those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh.* I adore your mercy, O God, in thus raising us by the merits of your Son's sacred passion imparted to us, and accepting our low endeavours for the acquitting our immense debts. And I acknowledge, as your holy Church teaches me, that in your merciful pardon for sin committed after baptism, you require
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of us a voluntary chastisement of our offences in ourselves as a reparation of the injury done to you, a true satisfaction to your justice, and a redemption of the temporal punishment due to sin, after its guilt is remitted, which remission is granted only on these terms.

By this conduct of Almighty God in holy penance, we admire both justice and mercy tempered together. We learn the difference of sins committed after holy baptism. We also see the difference between the sacraments of baptism and penance. The first being a regeneration, is more easy: the latter being a restoration after a relapse, operates by medicinal adulations, incisions and bitter remedies. The Fathers frequently repeat another reason of this greater severity in penance, lest if the remedy were too light, men should more easily return to sin.

4. The works of satisfaction are; 1. Contrition of heart, which, as it is an affliction of the mind, and something penal, is satisfactory. It is the doctrine of divines, that this may be so perfect and fervent, as to suffice alone, to remit all the temporal punishment due to sin, together with its guilt. 2. Prayer and sacrifice. 3. Fasting and chastisements of the flesh. 4. Alms-deeds. Innumerable passages of scripture and fathers might be produced for each of these; as *Tob. iv. 11. Alms deliver from all sin and death. Prov. xvi. 6. Iniquity is redeemed by mercy and truth, &c. St. Augustin observes that, Under fasting is comprised all chastisement of the body; under alms, benevolence and beneficence in giving and forgiving; under prayer, all the rules of holy desires. De pens. instit. T. 10. p. 174.*

Penance is not only practised by austerities, but also by denying ourselves even any innocent pleasures. If we are too cowardly to seek these crosses, let us not at least reject those which God sends us. We receive every day from heat, cold, dis-

appointments,

appointments, contradictions, afflictions, &c. let us cheerfully accept these in patience, with a desire to glorify God by them, by satisfying his holy justice, and destroying in our souls all the traces of sin. What goodness in our Judge, that he is pleased to accept for our sins, pains which we cannot avoid, even those to which this miserable life necessarily subjects us! What cowardice in us if we neglect to pay our debts at so cheap a rate, and chuse obstinately to reserve them to the rigour of God's justice! It is to be cruel to ourselves to neglect to redeem by light satisfactions what will otherwise cost us most dear.

5. Pretended penitents extol the efficacy and merit of interior penance, so as to deny, in a great measure, the necessity and advantages of the exterior, to exempt themselves from its laborious exercise, by which the life of a Christian ought to be a continued lingering martyrdom of penance, as it is usually stiled by the masters of a spiritual life. How do these accumulate debts to be most severely exacted to the last farthing? Again, do not such generally deceive themselves as to the sincerity of their contrition? Certainly we have the greatest reason to fear it. For an act of contrition cannot be sincere without a firm purpose of satisfying for sin by a penitential course. If this was not at least virtually included in it, the repentance was only counterfeit, as this purpose of satisfaction is an essential part of it. It is expressed in its definition in most divines. The scripture and councils mention it as a constituent ingredient. Now, if a penitent has this real desire and purpose, will he not carry it into execution, according to the circumstances of his state and opportunities? A true spirit of penance will find occasions continually, and cannot fail often to lay hold of them. A particular ardour in this duty is required in the penitential times ordained by the Church, and in sinners upon

upon their first conversion, as they stand in need of this remedy in a special manner, both to expiate their offences, and to strengthen themselves in their yet weak spiritual state.

6. It is from the Fathers, those channels through which our faith was conveyed down to us, and by whom its genuine practice was faithfully cultivated, that we are to learn the true maxims of penance. They have left us excellent entire books on this subject. One or two passages from them may suffice, which express the drift of their whole works. *Tertullian*, the most ancient of the Latins, of whom we have any large works, in his book on penance, c. 10. p. 127. writes thus: *Penance is the discipline of prostration and humiliation, prescribing a conversation proper to draw down mercy, giving precepts even as to dress and tables, to lie on sack-cloth and ashes, to cloathe the body meanly and sordidly, to afflict the mind with sorrow, and to change the delights of sin into grief; to live only on bread and water, to nourish by fasts frequent prayer, to sigh, weep and howl to God day and night, to cast themselves at the feet of the priests, and fall on their knees to the servants of God, and to conjure all the brethren by their prayers, to become intercessors to God, in their behalf.—Penance pronounces sentence against the sinner for the justice and indignation of God, and by a temporal affliction not so properly avert, as perfectly overcome eternal torments.—As much as you shall not have spared yourself, be persuaded that God will so much the more spare you, c. 11. p. 128.* He complains that some dread penance on account of its austerities. He asks these; if a life of ease and vanity can ever satisfy for sin. Penitents must use all contrary severities; and answer to those that shall ask them the reason or invite them to mirth; *I have sinned against God, and am in danger of perishing everlastingly; therefore I am now anxious and tortured in mind, and macerate my body to reconcile God to me whom I have offended by sinning.*

ning*. He bids them see what heathens undergo for the world, and reflect on hell, which penance will extinguish: at the remembrance of its grievous torments, no one can boggle at the remedy.

St. Cyprian, *Tr. de lapsis*, p. 96. Let us appease his anger and displeasure by fasting, weeping and mourning, as he admonishes us. And p. 98. *ib.* It is necessary for penitents to pray more earnestly, to pass the day in mourning, and the night in watching and weeping, spending all their time in tears and lamentations: to have no beds but ashes, no cloathing but hair-cloth and poor mourning weeds: after having cast off the garments of Christ to wear no worldly garments; after feeding with devils to chuse fasting; earnestly to employ themselves in good works by which sins are cleansed; to give frequent alms, by which souls may be delivered from death. Does she mourn, who still puts on costly apparel? &c.

St. Ambrose, l. 2. *de pœnit.* p. 417. writes thus: I have more easily found such as have preserved innocence than such as have done due penance.—The world is to be renounced, sleep to be shorter than nature requires, it is to be abridged by sighs, to be broken by groans, it is time set apart for prayer; such a life is to be led as may be a dying to all the enjoyments of life: that a man deny himself and be all changed. And again, l. *de lapsu virg.* p. 314. You are to extinguish in yourself all care of this life, thinking only how to recover your spiritual life. Put on poor mourning weeds, punish your will and every member with a due chastisement. Let your face grow pale; your eyes always stand in tears; your whole body be macerated with fastings, and covered with hair-cloth and ashes, and your heart melt within you by compunction, &c. And on the 37th psalm, p. 820. He who does penance ought to be ready to bear in-

* “ Deliqui in Deum, A periclitator in æternum perire. Itaque
“ nunc pendeo & maceror & excrucior ut Deum reconciliem
“ mihi quem delinquendo læsi.”

juries, and not be moved if he hears himself reproached with his crime. For, as he accuses himself, how does he not bear another accusing him? He is to offer himself to punishment, to be here chastised by our Lord, and not spared for eternal torments. He ought to meet the divine indignation.

St. Pacian, one of the most elegant and learned fathers of the fourth age, defines thus what it is to do penance. *Parænesis ad pœnit.* p. 317. To weep in the sight of the Church, to go meanly clad, to fast, pray, prostrate: if any one calls to the bagnio, to refuse delights: if any one invites to a feast, to say: Such things are for happy souls which have never sinned: I have offended the Lord, and am in danger of perishing everlastingly. What have I to do with banquets, who have injured the Lord? Moreover, to take hold of the hands of the poor, intreat the widows, fall down at the feet of the priests, beg the whole Church to employ themselves in prayers for him, and to try all means not to be eternally lost.

7. In exterior penitential austerities, the greatest care is to be taken that they be accompanied with the most fervent inward spirit possible; as this alone gives them all their merit. The penitential soul seeing God infinitely holy, hating and persecuting sin as the enemy of his glory, enters into sentiments conformable to his, conceives the most sovereign hatred possible of this evil, and the most sincere desire utterly to destroy that object of his abomination, and prevent his justice upon herself, by revenging on herself the injuries with which she has dishonoured him.

Is any thing more honourable or more just than thus to act in concert with the divine justice in the destruction of sin? Than for the sinner to punish his own offences in himself. Such a satisfaction is so much the more honourable to God, as free choice in works intended for his glory honours him more than a suffering by constraint; and as it is
voluntarily

voluntarily undertaken out of the motive of his holy love, and the same with that of his divine justice.

8. He enters upon the exercise of penance with an ardent desire to acquit the debts he has contracted to Almighty God. A just man always is uneasy speedily to satisfy all his creditors, and would never die without having paid off all his debts, when he has it in his power to do it. This ought to be much more so in what we owe our God, our Creator, infinite Benefactor, sovereign Happiness and last End. It is always an obstacle to perfect friendship to owe any thing to a friend, only that debt or obligation of still loving him, which can never be exhausted. *Rom. xiii. 8.*

Our own interest also ought to oblige us to this. If reserving debts only to pay by force is immensely to increase our accounts; *it is a new offence to have sinned, and not to satisfy; to have injured God, and not weep for the injury;* as *St. Cyprian* writes, *de laps.* The voluntary chastisement of sin in ourselves, with the merit of patience and virtue, through the sacred merits of Christ, is far more light and easy than that of another world. Which do I chuse? I must renounce my reason if I say the latter, and my faith if I deny both. *All iniquity, whether it be great or small, says St. Augustin, Serm. 11. pa. 58. n. 13. t. 4. p. 565. must necessarily be punished either by the man penitent, or by an avenging God: for he who repents truly will chastise himself. — Absolutely either you punish yourself, or he punishes. Would you that he should not punish? then punish yourself.* He repeats the same in several other sermons, as in the 19, 20, &c.

St. John Climacus relates, *Gr. 4. c. 5.* that a certain monk, named *Antiochus*, went in this spirit to live in a very severe monastery, under an exceeding harsh superior. In the first night, in his sleep, he seemed to see certain severe persons, demanding

of him a terrible account of one hundred pounds of gold. Awaking in the morning, he said to himself: *Poor Antiochus, we lie under a heavy debt, and have a great sum to pay off.* After three years spent in great austerities, he saw ten pounds blotted out in the schedule of his debts. Alarmed and terrified, he redoubled still his fervour in penance, and to suffer more, feigned himself foolish, bore with invincible patience and joy, all manner of insults and ill treatment, and made himself, as it were, the ass of the house, to carry the heaviest burdens of every body. After 13 years, he saw his whole debt effaced.

9. The virtue of penance belongs to vindictive justice, which is employed in punishing crimes in proportion to their deserts; it is a species contained under it, as *St. Thomas* observes. The satisfaction therefore for sins, must be greater, according to the heinousness and number. It is to follow the rule of the divine justice, in the place of which it substitutes itself to satisfy and prevent its more heavy severity. This the Fathers frequently put penitents in mind of. *Let the greatness of your grief equal the enormity of your sins,* says *St. Cyprian, de lapsis, p. 98.* *Let not a long and diligent remedy be wanting to a deep wound. Let not the penance be less than the crime.* And *St. Gregory the Great,* quoted by *St. Isidore, l. 2. sent. c. 13. p. 440.* *He doeth penance worthily who laments his fall by a proportioned satisfaction, condemning himself the more severely as he has been more guilty.* The stripes must be proportioned to the crime.

A penitent must therefore ascend the tribunal in his own soul against himself. And as it is not enough in justice, that a criminal be convicted and condemned, but he is also to be executed: so, after having carefully examined, impartially accused and condemned his own criminal heart before God, he must inflict upon it, and its instrument or accomplice

complice the flesh, a punishment sufficient to satisfy the inflexible justice of God. It belongs not to him to spare: that is only in the power of his sovereign, according to whose rules he is to pronounce upon himself: and let him lean to severity rather than to mildness, knowing *that God will the more spare him, the more he shall have not spared himself*, as *Tertullian* and *St. Cyprian* repeat. Christian penitents, says the first, again, always judge severely, being certain of the rigorous tribunal at which we are hereafter to be tried.

10. We must also love and embrace penance to secure ourselves from present and future dangers. How can we complain that we are tempted violently, and that the flesh revolts, whilst we neglect the means to subdue it, and the means to which God has annexed his graces of victory? Let us animate ourselves against our body, which ought to be the slave of the soul, but which, by pampering and flattering it, we make the master. Let us, in this holy hatred of so dangerous an enticer to evil, and in this holy spirit of penance, treat it severely; and we shall find its habits weakened and our soul strengthened. The great reason of souls making so little progress in perfection, and in mastering their passions, is their general aversion to the practice of penance and mortification.

11. Men, to exempt themselves from the practice of penitential works, call them works of supererogation, alledge their bitterness and the weakness of their own constitution. By these pretexts they deceive themselves, and though they would pass for faithful Christians, live like professed enemies of penance, and of the cross of Christ. The essential and nobler part is indeed the interior; but the exterior is also an indispensable part. Are not the precepts of the gospel most express and strong? In the list of saints and true Christians, can I find one whose life was not a perpetual penance?

Even

Even those who were always preserved most pure from the corruption of any sin, with the *Baptist*, lived innocent martyrs of penance; nor could they, without its arms, have ever maintained their virtue, or obtained the graces they received. I have rebellious passions to subdue, a world and a Satan to fight against; penance is my arms. I am a christian, consequently by obligation, a penitent. I have also other reasons to rank myself in this class. I have sinned grievously. I cannot hope to be saved by the path of innocence, I must then walk in that of penance, and live by its laws; or I can hope for no salvation.

12. Faint-hearted penitents are afraid of mortification, because it is bitter. Penance must be so. The sinner offended by pleasure; this must be expiated by chastisement. Is it not a happiness to appease an offended God, and sheathe the sword of his indignation? Is it not a false pity here to spare ourselves? If a man, out of a cowardly delicacy, dare not press a sore hard enough to cleanse it, and to suffer it to grow worse, and perhaps gangrene, is not this an ill-placed tenderness? Or will not the surgeon who sees him, squeeze the ulcer more roughly? So will God prepare much more grievous chastisements for those who refuse to undertake sufficient penances. *He who is afraid of the hoar-frosts shall fall into snow. Job vi. 16.*

But though penance be contrary to sensuality, and to the corrupt inclinations of nature; yet true penitents find more true content in weeping for their sins, and mortifying their passions, than they ever did in gratifying them. A contrite heart finds a sweetness in tears as in its most delicious food. *Thou shalt feed us with the bread of tears. Ps. lxxix.* Also other mortifications have, I know not what of sweetness in them, which a true penitent would not exchange for all the pleasures of the world, The solid hope of pardon, and the recovery of God's

friendship,

friendship, with all its incomparable advantages, are sufficient comforts to mitigate their rigour, and the unction of the Holy Ghost often makes them sweet. This *St. Augustin* testifies. *Tears themselves are sweet, and shall be as a delicious food. Enar. in Ps. 126.* And again: *Behold thou art there in the heart of those who confess to thee, and weep in thy bosom; and thou mildly wipest away their tears, that they may weep more, and rejoice in their weeping. Conf. l. 5. c. 11.* Let them then fear penance who do not love it, who carry its yoke without its spirit. But to these, its tears are like spring showers, which bring gaiety, joy and plenty. For a true spirit of penance inspires a certain love of penitential works, as it gives an insatiable desire to destroy sin, and its instruments, with all the obstacles of grace, to advance in charity, and resemble Christ covered with wounds for us, and bearing the ensigns of penance in his holy body, for our pattern.

13. Many excuse themselves on account of the weakness of their constitution. But these, so delicate and tender in penance, can often resist fire for the world, though they melt at the first beam of the sun for virtue. If it be for company, for play, for dancing, or some humour, diversion or honour, they can watch, fast, fatigue themselves, or curb their passions, without so much as thinking of it. But to satisfy for sins, the least inconvenience or constraint to nature, is insupportable; the least sickness at stomach is magnified as mortal, though it perhaps be only the wholesome effect of temperance. Excesses in austerities are many ways pernicious. To avoid this danger, let every one follow, in the choice of his course, the advice of a discreet director not apt to flatter. *For he that makes himself the master of his own spiritual conduct, makes himself the disciple of a mad governor, as St. Bernard says, ep. 87.* The very renouncing self-will

will in this choice, will be the first advantage towards the end proposed in satisfaction.

Every one can bear, in a spirit of penance, the crosses and sufferings which God sends, and those to which nature is subject. Every one can deny himself in many satisfactions and worldly enjoyments. Every one can refuse his senses and inclinations in many things, saying to himself: I have offended God, and must appease his indignation, by punishing my criminal flesh or heart. Let fasts, alms, and the like works, be proportioned to every one's capacity and exigencies. Any impossibility in them may be made up other ways, at least, by more frequent penitential aspirations and prayers. Every one must, in the first place, retrench occasions of sins: if he has offended by his tongue, his eyes or ears, these must be restrained, &c. His heart must be more diligently watched; sloth and sensuality curbed. Every one must also laboriously employ himself in the occupations of his calling. For the rest, let no one flatter himself with groundless suggestions of self-love against other austerities.

Ah! It is not that penance is impracticable in my circumstances, but because I want courage and fervour to undertake it, that I am dismayed at it. If I once resolutely enter upon it, in a decent manner, I shall be surprized to see how vain my fears of it were. It is only the first commencement which seems severe to nature, not yet accustomed to its yoke, nor yet tasting its unction and sweetness.

How am I ashamed of my base cowardice and sloth, when I look on the examples of innumerable holy penitents! I see thousands, young and old, sick and healthy, strong and weak, of all ages, sexes and countries, walk cheerfully in the path of most austere penance; and shall I alledge impossibilities? Not to speak of the many examples of distant

distant ages; let me but visit the ladies of the *Ave Maria* in *Paris*, the deserts of *Carmaldoli*, *Sept-fons*, *Orval*, the *Charter-house* or *la Trappe*, and I shall find enough to confound my delicacy. Can I do nothing, whilst I see many more tender and weak, cheerfully do so much!

14. To consider only the *Reformed Cistercians* of *la Trappe*, a monastery in *Perche*, five leagues from *Belesme*, three from *Mortagne*, in the diocese of *Sesze*, on the confines of *Normandy*, in a country the most nearly resembling the English climate and soil, of any in France; The house is low built, in a square, mean, and without any ornaments, except in the Church. It stands a league distant from the village, in the midst of a great forest, but has a mean, cheap inn near it, for the convenience of such strangers as do not chuse to live with the Monks; for those must content themselves almost with their fare. In the year 1746, there were in this house, when I saw it, 60 lay-brothers and 57 choir monks, of which 18 were priests; for they promote none to orders, after their admission among them. There were three *Oblaters*, a sort of half lay-brothers, who can speak to one another or to strangers. One of these comes out to any stranger, falls down at his feet, conducts him into a chapel to say a prayer, and thence into a parlour or guest-room, in which hang rules, which strangers are desired to observe there; particularly that they mention nothing of news, and be very short in all their questions and words. Whoever they are, only the Abbot or guest-master can speak to them or entertain them. These monks, before their profession, write to their friends in the world, for the last time, to take their farewell, and order their goods to be given to the poor; for they are not allowed to give any thing to the monastery. After this, they can never more write to or hear from any friend, not even a parent, or speak to him, if he comes to see them in

the monastery, though the Abbot gives them usually leave to shew themselves before him. If any one's parent or other relation dies, only the Abbot receives the news of it, and he tells the religious all together, that God has called to himself one of their fathers, brothers, &c. and bids them all pray for him, but no one hears whose it is. They never speak to any secular, not even a father, on any account whatsoever; nor ever hear what passes in the world, whether it be in war or peace, what kings rule, &c. only the Abbot usually recommends to their prayers, the publick affairs of the church or state, without giving them any detail. Only the Abbot and master of novices know who are admitted into the house, or what belongs to them. They can never speak to one another, only by signs, except to their confessarius or superiors. They never contract any familiarities together. No one there is ever named but by his name in religion; and they only know one another by sight at most, nor great part of their house even so. A monk dying, expressed to his Abbot a great solicitude for a brother, thinking him yet in the world, though he had been many years a professed religious in the same house, and, for his satisfaction, was ordered by his superior to shew himself before him. They usually keep their eyes cast down on the ground, and only see those next to them, nor then but by their habit. They make a low reverence to strangers that pass by them, but never look up, or see any more of them than the lower part of their clothes. Walking in the refectory I could not perceive any one that gave one glance of curiosity. This puts us in mind of *Innocent* the third, one of the greatest Popes that ever governed the Church, who, returning from the Emperor's court, in the most magnificent state, and with the greatest attendance, visiting *St. Bernard's* monastery, observed that no one of the religious lifted up his eyes, to see him

or

or any of his train; so much were they dead to all curiosity, to their senses, and to whatsoever could dissipate their souls, or interrupt their attention to God: which made him look upon this house as the miracle of the world. The recollection of the monks of *la Trappe* in the fields, at work, at meat, and in all their actions, is most moving; but above all, in the Church.

They do every thing by obedience, and are not to take one step by their own choice. They are bound to obey, not only superiors, but also one another, by the least signs which the last lay-brother shall give them, though they by it spoil all their work, as happened to one, who by that means, knowingly, spoiled all their singing-books; for, as Abbot *John* told the gardener, it were better they should be without herbs, than have any plants of self-will. That Abbot, walking with a Bishop in the garden, ordered a religious, passing by without a reverence, because he did not see them, to prostrate; he obeying, lay so two hours, till the Abbot returning that way found him still in that posture, and bad him rise. Another, in obedience, continued to discipline himself several hours, till others informed the Abbot, who coming again, found him all bloody, yet not ceasing, because he had not fixed a time. Hence, even to refuse any service offered by another, passes for a great crime amongst them. The venerable Abbot of *Chatillon*, being there only a visitant, going up to his cell, a monk offered to light him up stairs; to whom he made a sign of refusal out of humility on his side. Though he was a stranger, one of singular piety, and eighty years of age, Abbot *John* next day summoned him to Chapter, proclaimed his fault, and reproached him in this manner: "Is it possible that, after being
" Abbot 25 years, you should not know the first
" rules of charity, and the first principles of your
" order! You had little to do, to quit your own
D d 2 house

“house to ruin the discipline of ours. I recommend you to the prayers of the community, and enjoin you to wait kneeling at the church-door, when the religious pass thither after dinner.”

They never speak any thing, even indirectly, in commendation of their house or order, to most a common topic of secret refined pride, under a public name; for every particular appropriates to himself, tacitly, a share of such a praise, and extols a house, because it is his own only. They keep many little books of piety, to distribute amongst the poor, or sell cheap to the rich; but will never willingly shew any wrote by those of their own house. They have no recreation, only an hour and an half's work in the fields every morning, and as much usually in the afternoon. On sundays and holydays, they spend this in their cells or in walking alone. They have five hours allowed for rest in the night; but this is interrupted for five hours from ten till three, or on holydays, four in the morning, in choir. They have nine hours every day in choir, singing in a firm high voice. Their beds are hard and uneven, worse than boards. From their rising till their going to bed, they hardly ever re-enter their cells; and have never any rest, going continually from exercise to exercise, and being always within sight of one another to banish sloth. This constant fatigue makes their legs swell very much. They never put on more clothes for cold, or less for heat, or change for sweating. Many of them are subject to violent rheumatisms, so as scarce to be able to drag themselves along. Their drink is very poor four cyder, such as is used by the poorest persons in *Normandy*; or for those monks from other countries with whom that does not agree, very small beer. On fasting days they only eat dry herbs boiled with a little salt, with a large slice of coarse bread, and half a pint of their cyder. On other days, their portion is, besides an herb

herb soup, and a dessert of a reddish or two, or a few walnuts, or the like, a little plate of crouty, or kidney beans, or lentiles, or other legumes or roots dressed with salt, or a little milk mixed. They never eat fish on any account; never touch eggs or flesh, unless very sick, and then only the coarsest and poorest, not any thing tender or dainty. Once, the bread being made a little less coarse than ordinary, the Abbot *John de Rancé* put the whole house under penance, to atone for the fault. At night, they have nothing but three, on Church fasting days, two ounces of dry bread. They have many disciplines, long prostrations, and practise a perpetual mortification of all their senses. Abbot *de Rancé* turned out a novice, as not having the spirit of the order, because he observed him in weeding, to put by the nettles, for fear of being stung. When they come to the fire, in winter, they must not approach very near it, but stand reading at a distance, in the calefactory, and never put out a foot, or pull up their clothes to warm themselves; nor stay long. The least fault is most severely proclaimed and punished. The motto written on their chapter-house wall is most literally true. *The slightest fault here passes for a crime, and is always punished according to the utmost rigour, without excuse, and without pity; and the body, the innocent enemy of the soul, becomes, by holy severity, her victim.*

Even in their sickness, the superior treats them with harshness, to increase their crowns.

Abbot *John* asking one very sick how he had slept, and he answering, Very ill; the Abbot said severely; *You are delicate, and unmortified indeed: you have slept too well.* The next morning he answered the like question of his Abbot, that he had slept well: the Abbot learning from the brother infirmarian, that he had not closed his eyes, chid him as a liar: the monk, with great simplicity answered, he had slept as well as the night before, which

which was too well for such a sinner. Under their greatest pains, they reproach themselves as faint penitents, and add to them voluntary mortifications. In their agonies they are carried to the Church, laid on ashes, and there receive the last sacraments, and remain till they expire truly happy martyrs of penance. This reform of the Cistercian order to its primitive institute, was made by Abbot *Armand, John le Bouthillier de Rancé* of an illustrious and puissant family in *France*. He entered an ecclesiastical state, and was destined to succeed his uncle in the Archbishopric of *Tours*. His learning and eloquence had made him Speaker of the Assemblies of the *French* Clergy, and their oracle. He was chaplain to the Duke of *Orleans*, and the King had heaped on him great church pensions and livings. Being thirty years of age, he began to entertain great scruples whether his employ of his revenues in equipages, table and great house-keeping, and that of his time in diversions and company, was according to religion and duty. He chose those directors who were the least likely to flatter him by their advice; and sold his own estate of 30000 livres, or 1400 pounds sterling a year, which he had inherited from his family. He distributed a hundred thousand crowns amongst the poor, and the rest in other pious uses; resigned three abbeys and two priories which he possessed in commendam, but taking on himself the Cistercian habit in his Abbey of our Lady of *la Trappe*, commenced the reformation of it, nearly according to the first institution of *St. Benedict*, and the reformation of *St. Bernard*, anno 1664. He testifies of himself, that he suffered more from the first victory over himself in rising without a fire in the cold than from all the mortifications he underwent afterwards. So much does this depend on the will and imagination. He died in the year 1700, being 75 years of age, of which he had spent 37 in that austere solitude,

tude. How cheerful these holy penitents are, under their rigours, appears from the visits which have been made of that house, in which every monk is obliged to discover his real sentiments, and in which they had offers of mitigations in their austerities. In the year 1678, the Abbot of *Prieres* being deputed visitor of *la Trappe*, declared that he found the religious, some of the most tender and delicate complexion, some above fourscore years of age, living on a water soup, made with cabbage or such herbs and salt, a portion of legumes, with only the same seasoning, brown bread and half a pint of cyder; yet all well, hearty, cheerful, and begging their austerities might be increased. See the life of Abbot *John*, wrote by *Marfoulier*, Canon of *Uzès*, or rather that by *Dom le Main* his superior.

Another time *anno* 1664, when many accused this institute as too severe for nature; Abbot *John* assembled his religious to declare their sentiments upon it. The fathers all cried out unanimously, that their mortifications were too light for heaven, and to satisfy for their sins; protesting they underwent them all with joy, and were ashamed of their sloth in not doing more. When it was urged by a certain prelate, that the lay-brothers, at least, ought to be allowed some indulgences, the same Abbot, *anno* 1687, summoned them to chapter, read this letter to them, and commanded every one to declare his opinion and desires. First, *St. Malc* said; *I have lived 20 years in this house, and never found any thing but what was easy and sweet. I have always regarded myself as wax, to receive from your hands, whatsoever figure you are pleased to mould me into: but I see myself as a wild horse; if I am not held in by the bridle: if my state wants a change, it ought to be more restrained. I have always endeavoured to obey and regard in you, the person of Christ.* Falling on his knees, he added, he was as an handkerchief in
his

his hand, which he might use in the manner he pleased. 2, *B. Pasomius* said, His life had been unprofitable, he wished his rigours augmented, and was ashamed to see how much worldlings undergo for vanity. 3, *B. Hilarion* said, His austerities ought rather to be redoubled, to subject his body to the spirit, lest he should lose his crown: that God having called him to that state, it was to be his sanctification. 4, *B. Firmin*, instead of relaxations, begged on his knees, his Abbot would shut him up in a close prison, as he had often done before. 5, *B. Francis* prayed his austerities might be increased. The rest every one gave the like answers. See *Abbot John's Conferences; Second Sunday after Epiphany, anno 1687. T. 1. p. 287.*

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1. Christ, to make penance a more easy and more powerful remedy of sin, was pleased, in his infinite mercy, to make it a sacrament of the new law, instituting it *an exterior sensible rite, with a promise of grace, for the pardon of sin committed after baptism.* For this, he gave to the priests or pastors of his Church, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the authority to bind or loose sinners, as they should present themselves before them contrite and worthy, or impenitent and indisposed. This he clearly expressed, saying to *St. Peter* in particular; *Mat. xvi. 19. I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.* And to all the apostles, and in them, to all their successors, the priests of his Church, as is evident from the foregoing verse. *Mat. xviii. 18. Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven;*

heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Christ, whose jurisdiction certainly reached mens interior or consciences, here gives his Church not only the authority of excommunicating, or exteriorly cutting off from her communion, contumacious and rebellious finners, but also an authority over their consciences, to bind or loose their penitent or impenitent souls, and consequently to open or shut to them the gates of heaven, thus investing them with his jurisdiction to be exercised in his name, according to the laws prescribed by him, and constituting them his delegates and vicegerents in his tribunal in his Church. If these words imply an authority of excommunication in the Church, if in an accommodative sense they may be remotely applied to the remote dispositions or means of obtaining pardon for sin; undoubtedly, their principal, proper and natural meaning is, this interior jurisdiction conferred on the Church in the sacrament of penance. This the very words clearly import, this the perpetual tradition of the Church and consent of the Fathers demonstrate. Moreover, what *Jesus* here promised, he, after his resurrection, actually conferred on his apostles. *John xx. 22. He breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*

The Fathers acknowledge this authority granted to the pastors of the Church. *Tertullian*, the most ancient writer of the Latins, proves Heaven cannot be shut to sinners, seeing the Lord left its keys to *St. Peter*, and *Peter* left them to the Church*. See *St. Cyprian*, ep. 54, ad *Cornel.* ed. *Pam.* & ep. 52. ad *Antionias.* *St. Jerome*, in *Matt.* c. 16. & 18.

* Memento hic Dominum claves ejus Petro, Petrum ecclesia reliquisse. *Tert. Scorpion*, c. 10. p. 496.

Ep. 1, ad Heliod. St. Augustin, l. 20. de civ. Dei, c. 9. l. 1. contra advers. legis, c. 18. Tract. 22, Ep. 49. in Joan. &c.

They extol this authority of priests over mens souls, in the most magnificent terms possible. St. Chrysostom writes thus; l. 3. de Sacerd. c. 5. T. 1. ed. Ben. p. 383. They who dwell on earth are intrusted with the dispensation of the things which are in heaven, and have received a power which God had neither given to the angels nor to the archangels: for neither was it said to them; Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, &c. Mat. xviii. They who command on earth have a power of binding, but only the bodies: but this bond reaches the soul, and transcends the heavens. And whatever the Priests do below, God confirms the same above, and the Lord ratifies and regards as firm, the sentence of his servants. Whose sins, says he, ye shall remit, they are remitted, &c. John xx. 23. What power could be greater than this? The Father gave all judgment to his Son. John v. 42. And I see it all given again by the Son to them.—If the Emperor shall have given this honour to a subject, that he may cast into prison, or release out of it, whosoever he shall please: he is looked upon with admiration. But he who has received from God so much a greater power, as heaven is more precious than earth, and souls than bodies, &c. And c. 6. p. 384. It was allowed to the priests of the Jews to cleanse the leprosy of the body; nay, rather not to cleanse, but to make trial of those that were cleansed;—but these have received the power, not to try them who are cleansed, but to cleanse, not the leprosy of the body, but the uncleanness of the soul. See St. Hilary in Mat. xviii. p. 700. with the Benedictines note.

They compare penance with baptism; and call it no less a sacrament Tertullian calls them equally the two planks after shipwreck. l. de pœnit. c. 12. And St. Ambrose, l. 1. de pœnit. c. 8. refutes the Novatians denying the Church could forgive all sins by penance.

penance. It matters not whether priests assume to themselves the authority of remitting sins by penance or by baptism. It is the same mystery in each*. But you say, that in baptism, the grace of the mysteries or sacrament works. What in penance? Does not the same name of God operate? What then? You assume the grace of God where you please, and reject it where you please. St. Austin compares penance with baptism, and expressly calls both a sacrament; l. 5. de Baptism, c. 20. t. 9. p. 155. Also in Psal. cxlv. n. 8. t. 4. p. 1642. So does Theodoret, Epit. div. decr. c. 28. t. 4. p. 314. St. Jerome says: Penance imitates the grace of baptism by the unspeakable clemency of our Saviour. l. 1. contra Pelag. t. 4. And ep. 1. ad Heliod, t. 4. par. 2. p. 10. speaking of priests he says; By whom we are Christians; who having the keys of the kingdom of heaven, judge, as it were, before the day of judgment.

They add, that sinners cannot receive pardon but by the keys of the Church and the priest's absolution, as shall be seen below.

The Church condemned the *Montanists* in the second century, and the *Novatians* in the third, because they denied the Church had authority, by virtue of the keys, to forgive all sins. This wickedly, says St. Ambrose, l. de pœnit. c. 6. seeing it was said to Peter, To thee I will give the keys, &c. From the state of the question against these heretics, it is evident the authority of remitting sin by the priestly absolution, was an incontestable truth allowed on both sides, only the heretics would restrain it to certain sins. Add, all the Oriental, schismatical and heretical Churches, agree in the necessity of sacramental confession and absolution, as is evident from all their professions of faith. See *Allatius*, *Arcadius*, and the certificates collected in the end of the third Tome of the book intitled *Perpetuite de*

* Idem in utroque mysterium est,

la Foy. Though some of those churches have been separated from the Catholic communion since the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth ages.

It is true indeed that only God forgives sins; but what he does by his Vicars and delegates, is his power, and his act and deed*. Nor is the Priest an independant judge; he can only pronounce sentence according to the laws of his supreme judge, he can absolve only those whom God has visited by the grace of compunction, as *St. Gregory the Great* says, *Hom. 26. in Evang. T. 1. p. 1555.*

2. In the institution of the sacrament of penance is implied a divine precept of confessing all mortal sins, committed after baptism to a Priest. *Luther* and *Calvin* call this confession advantageous and adviseable, but inveigh against the obligation or precept of it. What other heretics thought of it may be seen in *Bossuet's History of Variations, B. 3. and 11.* and the two brothers *Walemburgh, Tom. 2. p. 18.* The Council of *Trent, Sess. 14. c. 5.* declares, according to the tradition of the Catholic Church, that it is of divine precept, though not commanded by Christ to be necessarily public; neither could that be prudently ordained by any human law†.

Christ gave to the pastors of his Church the power of remitting or retaining sin, by the sentence they should pronounce in his name and authority, as has been seen. Now they cannot exercise this judgment, without knowing the case of the sinner, by his voluntary accusation of himself. As if a King gives a subordinate judge power to decide a cause; he, by the same warrant, cannot but give him authority to examine and know it. This the

* Solus hoc, inquires, Deus poterit. Verum est; sed & quod per sacerdotes suos facit ipsius potestas est. *St. Pacian ad Symphor. ep. 1,*

† See on this *Estius in 4 dist. 17.* *St. Marthe, Traite sur la Confession, &c,*

Apostles understood, and this the Church always practised from the earliest ages.

We read that when *St. Paul* preached at *Ephesus*, *Acts* xix. 18. *Many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds.* The word, *their deeds*, shews it was a particular confession of their sins, not a general accusation only that they were sinners. Nor were these catechumens or new converts: for the original Greek word is, *ἐξομολογούμενοι*, in the preter-perfect tense, *some of those who believed or were of the Faithful before.* It seems, from the following verse, they had, after their conversion, been guilty still of certain superstitious practices.

St. James, c. v. v. 16. *Confess your sins one to another*; that is, to the Priests of the Church, of whom he was then speaking, and whom he had just before ordered to be called for and brought in to the sick. The words, *your sins*, express clearly a particular confession in detail. *Origen*, *Hom.* 2. in *Lev.* *St. Augustin*, *Hom.* 12. inter 50. *Bede* in *Jac.* v. *Alcuin*, ep. 71.

The second Council of *Challons*, *St. Thomas*, &c. explain this of sacramental confession.

Also, *St. John*, ep. 1. 9. writes: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.* Which words *Estius* and *Calmet*, two exact and learned critics, say, must necessarily be understood of this sacrament, as the Apostle speaks of Christians, and says, *confess your sins*, not confess ourselves sinners.

To copy the clear testimonies of the Fathers would swell our reflections into a volume. Yet as this is obscured by many, it is necessary to quote some short passages, which may suffice to set the tradition and practice of the Church in every age in a clear light.

St. Clemens, bishop of *Rome*, and disciple of *St. Peter*, ep. 2. ad *Cor.* 11. 8. p. 137. ed. *Clerici*, exhorts all to penance whilst we have time; for after
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we have left this world, we can no more confess, or do penance.

In the second age, *St. Irenæus on Mark* the heresiarch, relates, that women converted from his sect could not be admitted into the Church till they had confessed their sins and secret lusts. And *B. 3. c. 4. on Cerdo* often repenting, and often relapsing, he says. *He finished, sometimes teaching privately his heresy, sometimes making a confession, "modo et smologesin faciens."* Not in public penance, which could never be repeated, but only in private confession. *Tertullian, l. de pœnit. c. 10. p. 127.* inveighing against those who shun or defer confession out of shame, says, *And so they perish with their shame**. See also *c. 9. p. 126. Origen, Hom. 2. in Ps. 37. n. 6. T. 2. ed. Ben. p. 688.* The scripture teaches us, that it is necessary that a sin be not concealed inwardly; therefore look about diligently to whom you ought to confess your sin;—if he sees your disease to be such that it ought to be exposed in the assembly of the Church,—this is to be done with mature deliberation, and the counsel of a sufficiently skilful physician. Hence it is plain there were many confessariuses besides the bishop and his grand penitentiary. And *Hom. 2. in Levit. T. 2. p. 191.* having enumerated six means, by which sin is forgiven, viz. martyrdom, baptism, alms, forgiving of injuries, charity in converting brethren, and the love of God, he adds (for mortal sin after baptism); there is a seventh, though painful and laborious remission of sin by penance,—when the sinner is not ashamed to confess his sin to the priest of the Lord, and seek a remedy. And *Hom. 3. ib. 11. 4. p. 196.* if we have done any thing in private, if we have committed any thing only in word, or in the secret of our thoughts, all must necessarily be told and published.

* Et ita crubescencia sua percunt.

In the third age, *St. Cyprian, Tr. de lapsis, p. 95.* relates, that true penitents, who had not fallen into idolatry, yet because they had only thought of it, with grief and simplicity, confessing this to the priests of God, making a declaration of their conscience, they expose the burden of their mind.—Let every one confess his sin, whilst he is yet in the world, whilst his confession can be admitted, whilst satisfaction done by the Priests is agreeable to God.

In the fourth age, *St. Basil, Reg. brev. qu. 288. T. 2. p. 288.* It is necessary to confess sins to those to whom the dispensation of the mysteries of God is committed.

And *qu. 110. p. 662.* he enquires, whether the abbess is to be present when a nun confesses to a priest.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, ep. Can. ad Leterium, Can. 6. T. 2. p. 122. speaking of secret theft, a sin not subject to public penance, he says; If he discovers his sin to the priest, with a heart entirely changed, he will cure his disease. And in his homilies upon penance, and against those who judge bitterly, *T. 2. p. 176.* or rather *St. Astorius of Amasa* in the same age, as *Photius* witnesses, *Col. 271*; Boldly discover thy secrets to him; manifest the hidden recesses of thy heart as occult wounds to a physician. He will have a regard both to thy honour and to thy health. Parents are more moved with their children's disgrace than the sons themselves.

St. Athanasius, T. 2. Collect. Patr. p. 103. by Montfaucon. As a man baptized by a priest is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Ghost, so he who confesses in repentance, through the priest, receives, by Christ's grace, pardon.

St. Ambrose is related, by *Paulinus* his deacon, in his life, to have been accustomed to weep over penitents confessing their sins to him, so as to have compelled them also to weep; and to have been more religiously scrupulous in discovering any thing

thing of crimes confessed to him, only to God in prayer for his penitents*.

That holy father writes thus, l. 2. de pœnit. c. 6. T. 4. p. 374. *If thou wouldst be justified, confess thy sin. For a bashful confession of sins, looses the bonds of crimes†. And l. c. 7. p. 376. Discover thy sin outwardly‡.*

And in his exhortation to penance, against a delay of it, he urges: *Because he knows not if he can receive penance hereafter, and confess his sins to God and the priest.* Which words St. Augustin also repeats, Serm. 393. Col. Hom. 41. T. 5. p. 1509§.

St. Augustin writes thus; Conc. 2. in Ps. 101. n. 3. p. 1103. T. 4. *When you hear a man, by confessing, bring forth his conscience, he is now brought out of the sepulchre; but he is not yet unbound; when he is unbound? by whom is he unbound? Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, &c. says Christ||.*

And Serm. 392. fol. 49. inter. 50. n. 3. t. 5. p. 1504. *Let no man say to himself, I do penance privately, I do penance with God. Therefore it was said without cause: Whatsoever you shall loose, &c. Therefore without cause were the keys given to the Church of God¶. And in Ps. lxvi. n.*

* Quotiescunque aliquis ad percipiendam pœnitentiam lapsus suos apud se confitebatur, ita flebut ut & illum flere compelleret: videbatur autem sibi, cum jacente jacere. Causas autem criminum quas, illi confitebantur, nulli nisi Domino soli apud quem intercedebat, loquebatur.

† Solvit enim criminum nexus verecunda confessio peccatorum.

‡ Dixi; foras tuum delictum prode.

§ Quia nescit si possit ipsam pœnitentiam accipere & confiteri Deo & sacerdoti peccata sua. S. Ambr. Exhort. ad pœnit.

|| Cum audis hominem confitendo proferre conscientiam suam, jam de sepulchro eductus est, sed non tunc solutus est. Quando solvitur? A quibus solvitur? Quæ solveritis, inquit, in terra, &c.

¶ Nemo sibi, dicat, occulte ago, apud Deum ago. Ergo sine causa sunt claves datæ ecclesiæ Dei. Frustramus evangelium Dei, frustramus verba Christi.

6. t. 4. p. 660. If you are concealed unconfessed, you will be condemned upon your confession*.

St. Pacian is very explicit on confession to the priest: *Paræn. ad pœnit. Cease to cover your wounded conscience†; &c.*

Sozomen, l. 7. c. 16. ed. Vailes, relates, that upon the origin of the Novation heresy, many Churches, seeing penitents are obliged necessarily to confess their sins, constituted a public pœnitentiary to hear them. He and Socrates, l. 5. c. 19. give us an account how a woman having confessed her crime in private, it was divulged by the penitentiary at Constantinople, to the great scandal of the Church, says Socrates. Upon this, Nestarius, then Archbishop of Constantinople, abolished the office of penitentiary. Calvin triumphs as if he had abolished private confession, which consequently could then only be looked upon as a church precept: but it is evident confession was held necessary in penitents, as Sozomen declares. Nestarius did not even take down public penance, which subsisted in that Church afterwards, as appears from St. Chrysostom, Hom. 3. in Ephes. & 9 & 12 in Hebr. from S. Nilus, ep. ad Charichum, The council in Trullo, &c. He then only took down all public confession of private sins, and the office of the public penitentiary, who was a public censor to inspect the manners of the faithful, and order public penance or public confessions, an authority which had been indiscreetly and scandalously used. After this, penitents confessed to whom they pleased, and according to their own devotion and prudence approached the sacraments. This fact therefore is a clear proof for the precept of confession.

St. Chrysostom, Hom. 5. de verb. Isa. t. 6. p. 132. ed. Ben. The throne of the priesthood is placed in heaven. He sits judge on earth: the Lord follows the

* Si non confessus lates, confessus damnaberis.

† Definite vulneratam tegere conscientiam.

servant, and confirms in heaven whatever he judges on earth. *Hom. 30. in Gen. p. 301. t. 4.* he says, the devil labours much to hinder us from confessing our sins, and discovering our wounds to the physician, and recovering health. And *Hom. 20. in Gen. p. 175.* he writes: *If he will hasten to the confession of his sins, and discover his ulcer to the physician who will heal and not reproach him;—and speak to him alone, no one else being conscious, and carefully declaring all things, he will easily amend himself. For the confession of sin, is their abolition.* And *Hom. 3. ad Pop. Ant. t. 2. p. 42.* Manifest thy sore to the priest. He teaches at length that the priests are the physicians of our souls, *l. 2. de Sacerd. c. 4. t. 1. p. 374.* As do *St. Jerome in c. 10. Eccle. S. Ambrose in Of. 37. St. Greg. Nyss ep. Com. Orig. Hom. 2. in Ps. 37.*

St. John Climacus, Gr. 4. n. 11. says, *Without which confession no one shall obtain pardon.*

And *John of Raithe*, his contemporary, in his *Annotations, ib.* We are bound by the necessity of the divine precept to confess our sins, as is manifest from the apostolical traditions.

Bede relates, *Hist. l. 5. c. 14. p. 393* that King *Caeured* exhorted a sick nobleman of a wicked life, to confess and relinquish his vices; but he answered that he would not now confess his sins, but when he should be restored to his health. And *l. 4. c. 27.* that such was the angelical countenance of *St. Cuthbert*, that no one durst in confession conceal any secrets of his heart from him.

Pope Innocent the first, ep. Decretals ad Devent. c. 7. t. 2. p. 1247. says; *It is the part of the priest, in weighing the malice of sins, to judge of them, that he attend to the penitent's confession.*

We have the ancient forms of confession, with interrogations, examples, &c. in the oldest ritual books, as of *St. Gregory the Great*, in his *Sacramentary, p. 213.* of *St. Fulgentius* and others in *Dom. Menard* in his *Notes, p. 450.* Others in *Dom. Martenne*

tenne de antiquis Rit. Par. 2. c. 6. p. 450. that of *John the Faster, Patriarch of Ople, in Morin. Append. p. 76, 94.*

Particular examples of private confession, besides those of public penance, we have in *St. Iræneus, in St. Ambrose, Socrates, &c.*

S. Ansbert, Archbishop of Rouen, was the confessor of Theodoric the first king of France. Mabilon, sæc. 2. Ben. p. 1055. As was *St. Wiro, Bishop of Rienmund, of Pepin the Great, Mayor of the King of France's palace, and founder of the greatest race of its kings, who was accustomed to go to him to confession bare-foot, and to obey his words. Boland, 7 Maii.*

Our adversaries object, that there is no mention of confessions before communion: but it was always of precept, for all guilty of mortal sin. Hence *St. Cyprian* inveighs thus against sacrilegious communions, *Tr. de lapsis. Contemning the sentence of the Apostle, Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily, &c. they came to the eucharist before sins are expiated, before the confession of the crime is made, before the conscience is purified by sacrifice and the imposition of the hand of the priest, and so they offered violence to his body and blood.* And *St. Ambrose, l. 6. in Lucam, c. 9. No one receives the food of Christ unless healed.— Let the order of the mystery be every where observed, that a remedy be first applied to the wounds; and after that he be fed with the heavenly banquet.* So speaks also *St. Pacian, &c.*

If *Eusebius, St. Chrysostom, and others* say, we are to confess to God alone, they often speak of a confession of praise, as *Eusebius in Ps. 191.* See *Montfaucon Prælim. c. 7. p. 31. Ceillei, t. 4. p. 410.* or of catechumens, or of the evening examen of daily venial sins, or of sacramental confession, which is often said also by moderns to be made to God alone, because only to his vicerent, presiding in his name, as *Godefrey of Vendome* says, *ep. 16.*

which is the same as when *St. Anastasius the Sinaite, Hom. de sacra syn.* says, *Confess thy sins to Christ through the priest.* And *St. Austin, serm. 393.* and *St. Leo, ep. 136. To God and the priest.*

D I S C O U R S E XVII.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1. **T**O make this sovereign remedy of penance more sure, more powerful, and more easy, our Divine Redeemer, the true Lover of lost souls, was pleased, in his infinite mercy and compassion for sinners, to raise it to the most excellent dignity of a sacrament of the new law of grace, and make it the vessel of his most sacred blood, and the noble instrument to impart the fruit of it, and the merits of his sufferings and death, to the most miserable of souls. For this end, he constituted the priests, whom he ordained the dispensers of his mysteries on earth, his vicars and delegate judges of sinners, committing to them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, by the use of which authority, according to the holy laws he has prescribed them, they reconcile truly penitent sinners which had relapsed after baptism, to his divine favour and grace, by the sentence of absolution, which they pronounce over them in his name, and following the terms of his merciful commission. So that they sit in his tribunal on earth, and it is his judgment which they exercise. He is the great invisible High Priest who absolves the penitent, and clothes him with his precious and most holy grace interiorly, whilst the priest exercises his exterior ministry. To his priests therefore, he has given a far greater authority than

than he ever bestowed on any angels or archangels: and God ratifies above and follows himself the sentence of his servants, as *St. Chrysostom l. 3. de Sacerd. c. 5.* and *St. Gregory the Great, de cur. past.* say; *They judge and pronounce his sentence, as it were before the day of his judgment.* As *St. Jerome* writes, *ep. 1. ad Heliodor, p. 107.* and *St. Hilary in Mat. xviii. p. 700. ed. Ben.* *To strike all with the greatest awe, he laid down the immovable judgment of the sentence of the apostles, (and their successors) that whosoever they should bind on earth, that is, leave bound by the chains of their sins; and whosoever they should loose, viz. upon their confession, receive to the pardon of salvation, these by the condition of the apostolic sentence should be either bound or loosed also in heaven.*

2. It may be alledged, that the sole virtue of penance, without any confession or sacrament, remitted sin in the old law, and has the same effect still, if joined with a desire of the sacrament, when it cannot be actually received. What then is the prerogative and benefit of this sacrament so much extolled? Its advantages are that it furnishes us a means of remission more powerful as it more nobly applies to the soul the price of our redemption and propitiation; more sure, as it pardons sin by a visible sign and exterior sentence; lastly, more easy and ordinary. The contrition which was of itself necessary to obtain pardon, was necessarily to be a great, intense, and quite extraordinary sorrow and grace, very rarely found in penitents just rising from the state of sin, and *because few arrived at that degree, pardon of sins could only be hoped for by very few that way,* says the *Roman or Trent Catechism.* But what was so rare and extraordinary a mercy, is, by this wonderful sacrament, made frequent and easy. It is true, the sacrament essentially requires contrition or the virtue of penance, as a constituent part; but this in a more ordinary degree, and its preparation,

ration, by its acts and special graces, helps to stir up that.

Hence the Church has always looked upon the benefit of this sacrament as a great mercy, and bewailed the death of penitents deprived of it, as a dangerous misfortune, though not absolutely to be despaired of. *St. Augustin* cries out with tears for such; if ministers of the sacraments are wanting, how great a destruction follows them who depart out of this world, either not regenerated by baptism or unbound by absolution, *ep. 228. ol. 180**. This saint himself had wept bitterly in perfect repentance: yet presumed not the grace of pardon received, but with baptism; *Conf. l. 4. c. ult. & l. 9. c. 4. & B. St. Paul, Acts xxii. 16. and Cornelius, Acts x. 2.* wanted baptism, though they had perfect contrition. And *St. Augustin* says; *How much soever a catechumen is advanced in virtue (by the ordinary course of grace) he still carries the burthen of his iniquity: it is not forgiven him only when he comes to baptism. Tr. 13. in Joan. n. 6. t. 3. p. 394.* It is the same equally of the sacrament of penance, according to the same holy doctor; wherefore the Catholics in *Africa*, seeing their bishops and priests carried into exile in the *Wandalic* persecution, thus bemoaned their own abandoned condition, destitute of the sacraments: *Who will baptise our little ones? Who will bestow on us the benefit of penance, and loosen those bound with sins, by the indulgence of reconciliation? because to you it was said, Whatsoever you shall loose, &c.* as *Victor of Utica* relates, *de Perf. Vandal, l. 2. p. 656. Bibl. Patr. t. 5. par. 3.*

On this account the Church forbids absolution to be ever denied to any sinner at the article of death; which was even an order of the first general council of *Nice*, *Can. 13.* whatever may have

* Si minister defuit quantum exitium sequitur eos, qui de isto sæculo non regenerati exeunt vel ligati-

been the severity of some private churches. See *Lupus Schol. ib.*

The Popes declare, *cap. presbyter, causa 26*. A priest refusing absolution to a dying man may be the cause of his damnation, and *Pope Celestius, ep. 2. t. 2. Conc. p. 1619*, related *cap. Agnovimus, causa 27. de pæn.* that this is to add a spiritual death to his corporal death, and to deprive him of salvation; adding, *we tremble with horror that any one should be found so impious and cruel, &c.* The Church therefore will have no reservation of cases in the article of death, but gives jurisdiction to all priests without the least restriction on that occasion, that no one, if possible, might die without the benefit of absolution. *Conc. Trid. Sess.* This sacrament then affords us a more easy and a more abundant grace of pardon, and an extraordinary mercy.

3. The better to understand this unspeakable benefit, we must reflect, that to have been once delivered from the sentence of eternal damnation was an infinite mercy; a grace which could have been no ways thought of by any creature, had not God's boundless clemency found the wonderful design, and carried it into execution, by a mystery which will ravish all creatures with astonishment to all eternity. Pardon was never offered to the devils for a single offence; much less so admirable a redemption as ours, by the incarnation of the Son of God at the infinite price of his adorable blood. But we were made partakers of this whole wonderful ransom by baptism, all our guilt was blotted out by it, and we were reinstated in grace and in all those glorious titles we had most justly forfeited; nay, our condition was made happier by this superabounding propitiation, and a promise and offer of greater crowns than if we had never been guilty of any rebellion against God. Who would have thought it possible that we could be so insensible and ungrateful as, after this mercy, again to relapse in-
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to sin, and make void so plentiful, so astonishing a redemption? And in case of such a baseness, what farther mercy could be hoped for? How justly should we deserve to be sentenced a thousand times over to the worst of hells? *There is now left no sacrifice for sins. Heb. x. 26.* Alas! my soul, I have been capable of, and have actually fallen into this so inconceivable and monstrous a guilt; yet the still more inconceivable mercy of God has provided me a second remedy. The ransom paid for my sin by Christ being infinite and inexhaustible, was graciously offered by him, to be applied to my soul, not once, but, O stupendous mercy, as often as, after the basest relapses, I should again sincerely have recourse to it. Penance is the great instrument of this stupendous grace, principally and most nobly, as it is a sacrament of the new law. My soul, admire the infinite mercy of God in having instituted it; praise his goodness in it in raptures of love and gratitude at the consideration of it, and resolve never to cease returning thy poor thanks for it. Ah! without it, where had I myself been? irretrievably lost, perhaps many times over.

4. Christ in this sacrament has given his Church an unbounded authority to forgive all sins in this sacrament, upon the condition of sincere repentance. The heresiarch *Montan* advanced, the Church ought not to remit more grievous sins, as idolatry, murder, fraud, fornication, and the like, lest such indulgence should be an encouragement to christians, sometimes to commit them. See *Tertullian, l. de pudic. c. 21.* *Novatus* of Carthage and *Novatian* of Rome, two schismatical priests, added this heresy to their separation from their pastors, that the Church even could not pardon apostasy from the faith into idolatry, and certain other heinous crimes. These errors were immediately condemned by the Church, and confuted at large by the

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the fathers of the second, third and fourth ages. For Christ's unbounded mercy gave to his Church an unlimited power to remit all sins whatsoever, and to whomsoever, upon their true repentance, as the express terms of his commission import, and the Church has always maintained and practised. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; being a direct resisting the calls of grace and the means of conversion, is called unpardonable, because difficultly to be forgiven, as its repentance is difficult and very rare; yet it is pardonable by the keys of the Church, unless actually closed by final impenitence, to which it usually leads souls. No one then, who seeks sincerely the remedy of his soul, is to be excluded the benefit of this universal and all powerful sacrament; for Christ would have no restriction or exception in his mercies, of which he established this the instrument. *He excepted no crime, who opened a pardon to all, says St. Ambrose, l. 1. de pœnit. c. 2. And St. Jerome, ep. ad Oceanum, t. 4. p. 646. Christ died in vain, if there are any whom he cannot revive. John the Baptist is not to be believed, who shewing Christ said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, if there are yet any in the world whose sins he has not taken away. O sweet and amiable mercy! O goodness most comfortable to sinners! How is God in it to be ever admired, loved and praised by all creatures to eternity!*

5. This sacrament is, by the divine law, promulged in it's institution, absolutely necessary for the remission of all mortal sin committed after baptism. How could the Church bind sinners, if they are not obliged to undergo its sentence, and to present themselves before its tribunal! A coercive jurisdiction, which is entirely precarious, and which delinquents are not obliged to submit to, must be null and of no force. For a sinner to say, that he does penance privately and before God alone,

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without recourse to the judgment of the Church, is to destroy the words of Christ to his Church; and to annul the power of it's keys; it is to make void God's gospel; to make void the words of Christ, as *St. Augustin* justly observes, *Serm. 292. fol. 49. inter. 50. n. 3. t. 5. p. 1504.* and as the Church has always both inculcated and practised.

Therefore, by the divine precept of Christ when he instituted this holy sacrament, and gave this law, all who by baptism have subjected themselves to the Church, and have afterwards violated the laws of the gospel, were bound to submit themselves to, and to undergo the judgment of this same holy Church in the interior tribunal of penance, in which it exercises the power given it by Christ of remitting and retaining sins.

Hence there is a great difference between the remission of sin committed before, and of that committed after baptism. *Sin committed before baptism, is washed away by baptism; if committed after baptism, it is healed by penance and reconciliation, says St. Augustin, l. 2. de adult. conjug. c. 16. t. 6. p. 414.* This then is the only bath that remains to cleanse my offences after baptism. How diligently must I use it!

6. Perfect contrition, from a motive of fervent, intense charity, as in the old law, so it still justifies immediately. God's promises for this grace are clear, and regard all times and dispensations of his law. *Ezech. xxxiii. 12. Luke x. 12.* Whence *St. Chrysostom* says, *Hom. v. in 2 Tim. t. 12. p. 703.* *As fire entering a wood, clears and removes all before it, so the fervour of love wheresoever it falls, it cuts up and takes away all that demolishes the divine seed of grace.—Where charity is, all evils are removed;—for all sins are loosed and cleared by the presence of charity.*

But this perfect degree of contrition is known only to God, and is always uncertain to us, without
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a revelation. And we know it to be a very extraordinary grace in sinners just arising from their crimes. Miracles of such conversions are very rare. *I do not say, says the Lord, but I may save some such: for I am able in a moment to restore all: but I shall not assemble great conventicles of such, as St. Bernard writes, Serm. 75, de di. and as the Trent catechism says, n. 37. Few come to this degree.*

And even when perfect contrition does justify before the sacrament be actually received, or when it cannot be received for want of a priest, it implies a resolution of satisfying this precept, by confessing if possible, and submitting to the tribunal of the Church. This purpose ought to be explicit in all who have not an inculpable ignorance of the divine precept of confession: in others, it must be an implicit one, of doing all in general that God requires for pardon. For justification received before, does not exempt from the law of subjecting the sin to the tribunal of the Church; nay, that grace is only conferred upon the condition, and in virtue of such a purpose. The council of Trent expressly teaches, *Sess. 1. c. 4.* that though this contrition is sometimes perfected by charity, and reconciles to God before the sacrament be actually received, *nevertheless this reconciliation is not to be ascribed to that contrition, without the desire and purpose of the sacrament which is included in it.*

7. This is the constant tradition of the Catholic Church. Hence the fathers called this sacrament the only plank remaining after shipwreck. Thus *St. Jerome, ep. ad Demetriad, 99. ol. 65. p. 790. t. 4. par. 2.* calls it *that second plank, as it were, to the miserable after shipwreck.* And *St. Pacian* reproaches the *Novatians* who denied the Church could remit all sins, as guilty of the utmost cruelty, and says, *ep. 1. ad Symphor. Who could take away the plank from one perishing?** *St. Ambrose* says, *l. 1. de pœnit.*

* *Quis naufrago tabulam eripiat,*

c. 16. t. 2. p. 414. *If any one having secret crimes, yet does penance diligently for Christ, how does he receive pardon, if the reconciliation of the Church be not granted him?** And St. Leo, ep. 82. al. 91. ad Theodor. t. 1. p. 605. *The manifold mercy of God has so provided for mens falls, that the hope of eternal life is repaired not only by baptism but also by the medicine of penance. The help of the divinc goodness being so ordained, that God's mercy cannot be obtained but by the supplications of the priestst†.*

Hence I may apply to myself the words of Tertullian, l. de pæn. c. 4. p. 122. *Penance is life.—You, O sinner, like to me, nay less than me; for I acknowledge my surpassing guilt, so seize on, so embrace it, as one ship-wrecked the safety of some plank. This will raise you up, drowned in the floods of sin, and will bring you into the haven of the divine clemency. Suddenly lay hold on the opportunity of the unexpected safety.*

8. Venial sins are not necessarily to be confessed, or subjected to the tribunal of this sacrament, as they do not shut eternally the gates of heaven; consequently they cannot be retained or bound. There are also many other means, by which a soul in the state of grace may obtain pardon of them. For this, indeed, it is necessary that she repent of them at least virtually, if they do not occur. Secondly, that she be in God's favour by sanctifying grace, as God's friendship and familiarity must be presupposed, for his close familiarity to be recovered. Charity must be in a soul, or an encrease of its fervour cannot be obtained; and one who wilfully perseveres an enemy of God, can never, in that state, make any satisfaction to God, or receive the pardon of any offence. Venial sins of frailty seem to be usually blotted out by interior contri-

* Si ei communio non refunditur.

† Ut indulgentia Dei nisi supplicationibus sacerdotum nequeat obtineri.

tion: but not venial sins of malice or of direct knowledge and deliberation: which require other more powerful remedies.

9. Though venial sin does not absolutely stand in need of the sacraments to be blotted out; yet it is no other way so easily and so powerfully washed away as by the sacraments, especially by baptism, the blessed eucharist, and extreme unction; and above all, by the sacrament of penance, Christ's commission to his Church expresses all sin whatsoever. It's absolution therefore has a power of remitting all sin that is subjected to it with true repentance. And this sacrament is the universal medicine for all the wounds of the soul. The least sin is a debt too great for all the endeavours of creatures, ever to be able to pay, only by the application of the blood of Christ, without which there is no remission. It alone can wash any of our stains. Only the Lamb that was slain and is risen again, can efface sin out of the book in which it is written, or even bear the sight of that book. All the whiteness of the robes of the saints comes from being whitened in his blood. *Apoc. vii. 15.* Prayer, patience, pardon of injuries, and other good works, with repentance, in the just, will apply the blood of Christ for the remission of venial sin: but the sacrament of penance is its proper vessel and most powerful instrument for this effect. Also, the more slothful Christians now-a-days are in the practice of other means, and the severer works of penance, the more fervent and diligent ought they to be in the use of this; of confessing their venial sins. The confession of venial sins not only obtains absolution, but also incredible strength against them, a singular light to discover them, and plentiful graces to repair the losses and damages caused by them; and exercises in one act humility, obedience, charity, and other virtues, as *St. Francis of Sales* observes, *Introd. Part 12. c. 2.* The spirit
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and practice of the saints and of the Church, a rule that can never err in morals, as it is the spirit of Christ himself, authorises this frequent confession of venial sins. This is the argument made use of by the council of *Trent*, *Sess. 14. c. 4**. *St. John* exhorts to the frequent confession of venial sins, or such as the most just fall into, and which no one can say he is without. *St. John* i. 8. for he attributes the pardon of them only to the blood of Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse from all sin, *v. 7*. And for this he advises to confess them, *v. 9*. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, *i. e.* he is faithful to his promises to his Church to remit them. *St. James* also, *c. v. v. 16*. exhorting to frequent confession, speaks evidently of small faults, such as are daily in the just. This practice in the Church is clear from the life of *St. Theodore*, the *Studite*, the *Penitential*, &c.

But though this be a most wholesome and advantageous counsel; nay, in many, necessary to make them watchful against the multiplication of such falls; yet a too solicitous, prolix and tedious confession of venial sins is to be avoided, because it exhausts the soul superfluously, loses too much time, and hinders the heart from its best employ, the exercise of its affections, as *Gerson* observes.

10. Though if a sin has been once subjected to the keys of the Church in a valid confession, followed by a legal sacramental absolution, there can be no farther obligation of ever confessing it again; yet such a practice is often good and advantageous. For though it be remitted, it still is a sin committed after baptism, consequently still sufficient matter of this sacrament; for it is still an object of an act of the virtue of penance. We are also still to pray for a fuller and more perfect pardon of it. Be not without fear for sin forgiven, *Eccl. v. 5*.

* Quod piorum hominum usus demonstrat,

The priest at mass daily prays for pardon of all his innumerable past sins; so ought all who assist at that sacrifice of propitiation. *David* always continued to pray for the pardon of the sins of his youth. *Pf.* xxiv. 7. *Job* always feared for them. *Job* xiii. 26. Again *David* testifies God had assured him his sins were remitted; *Pf.* xxxi. 5, 6. yet still prays for a fuller pardon, and to be cleansed whiter than snow, and washed more and more. *Pf.* l. 4, and 9. There are degrees in justification; one drop of Christ's blood can wash away all the sins of the world; but the application of it is only as Christ has instituted, and depends on the conditions on our side. We must be justified more and more till death. *Naaman's* leprosy was washed seven times in *Jordan*, before it was perfectly cleansed, so that his skin was made as white as a child's. 4 *Reg.* v. 4.

D I S C O U R S E XVIII.

CHAP. I. ON THE VIRTUE OF RELIGION.

1. **R**ELIGION is a moral virtue which commands and pays to God that worship, which is due to his sovereign Majesty, for his supreme excellence. It is the first, the most noble, and the queen of all virtues, as *St. Thomas* and all divines unanimously observe. *Lactantius*, *Inst.* l. 4. c. 28. derives the name Religion from the *Latin* word, *religio*, to bind, because it binds us to God; which is a tie more strong, more sacred and more indispensable than that of any other virtue, as piety towards our parents, or justice towards our fellow-creatures. The word piety often signifies religion; but it is more general, as it is applied to the duty of

of children to their parents, no less than to that which we owe to God. From the dignity, merit, and obligation of religion, it necessarily follows, that a transgression against it, in any point of moment, is more grievous, than a sin against any other moral virtue.

2. The motives which recommend to us, the exercise of the virtue of religion, are the most pressing, whether we consider those which are drawn from the supreme dignity of God, those drawn from ourselves, or those drawn from the obligation, excellency and merit of the virtue itself. The first is the supreme excellency of the divine Majesty. For *He is alone*, Job xxiii. 13. Whence he says; *I am that I am*. Exod. iii. 14. In the same sense, *No one is good but God alone*. Mark x. 18. *His name alone is exalted*. Ps. cxlviii. 12. To think of, or to express his incomprehensible greatness, all eloquence is dumb, and every understanding faint. The angels in heaven never cease praising him, crying out! *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts*; we on earth ought incessantly to repeat, annihilating ourselves in the admiration of his adorable Majesty; *To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, Amen*. 1 Tim. i. 17. offering to him the sovereign homage of all our thoughts and actions. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him alone*. Deut. vi. 13.

3. A second motive is our essential dependence on God, in whom we live and move. We can have nothing, we can do nothing but in and by God. It is then most just that we should give to him the homage of all, and employ our whole life and strength for him, and to glorify his holy name.

To this we must add the innumerable and unspeakable benefits which we have received and every moment do receive from him, in body and soul; for every one of which, we owe him the perpetual homage of our praise and thanks.

Again,

Again, we belong to God, and are his. *All souls are mine. Ezech. viii. 4. All things which are under the heavens are mine. Job xli. 2.*

Another consideration is, that God is our last end. *He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Apoc. xi. and xxii.* We are created to worship, love and honour him. If we neglect this, we wilfully destroy the end of our being, and contemn so noble a dignity. *Lactantius* writes thus upon this subject. *Man, amongst living creatures, seems created upright, that he might be excited to the contemplation of his heavenly parent: he alone received the use of speech, that he might resound the Majesty of his Lord. All things on earth are subjected to him, that he might be subject to God, his framer and maker. If God would have man to be his worshipper, and on that account gave him so great honour as to make him lord of other things, it is most just that he should worship God, who has bestowed so great things upon him. De ira Dei, c. 13.*

4. Other motives are, that God, who has forbidden this sovereign worship to be given to any other, has strictly commanded that it be paid to him. Who can be so base, so ungrateful, and so insensible, as to transgress the positive, just, and necessary precept of so great a Lord, and so liberal and kind a benefactor?

Moreover—by baptism we solemnly bound ourselves to this obligation, and were incorporated in Christ for this end.

The eternal recompence which God has promised to us, is also a strong spur to our sloth in this duty; it is proportioned to our fervor and assiduity, so are the punishments prepared by him for those who shall be remiss in it. *Whoever shall glorify me, him I will glorify, but they who contemn me shall be ignoble. 1 Reg. xi. 30.*

5. The singular excellency and advantages of the practice of this virtue recommend it strongly

to us. Nothing is more honorable, nothing more noble, nothing more just or more worthy a creature. If it be great or desirable in the eyes of the world to serve a glorious, just, bountiful and powerful King, to attend always near his person, and enjoy his presence and conversation, what is it always to enjoy this favor with God?

Religion is a virtue most meritorious in itself, and which sanctifies a man's whole life, and all his actions, making them all perfect sacrifices to God. Corporal austerities, or exterior virtuous actions, are of little value, unless sanctified by it. Whence *St. Paul* recommends it to his beloved disciple in these words: *Exercise thyself unto godliness. For bodily exercise is profitable to little, but godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. iv. 7, 8. By it, a soul renews perpetually the consecration of herself to God; never ceases to adore him, and to sanctify his holy name:—by her understanding, —raising in herself the highest idea possible of his immense greatness:—by her heart and will,—humbling and annihilating herself before him, and praising and magnifying him:—by her tongue,—offering him incessant sacrifices of vocal prayer:—by her body,—in exterior adorations:—by all her actions,—referring all of them to the divine honour.

6. The properties of the virtue of religion are a filial fear of God; a careful flight of the least sin and all dangerous occasions; an ardent zeal for God's honour; a perfect love or charity; a vehement desire of always advancing in the love and faithful service of God; a love and esteem for whatever belongs to the divine service; and a scrupulous exactitude in it to the minutest circumstance. An affectionate servant is attentive in the least things which regard his Master's service. Much more ought we to be attentive in every circumstance of

of our actions which belong to the service of God. A spirit of religion is very solicitous not to neglect the least act of duty, remembering who he is whom it honours, and labouring to give, in the least things, a proof of a boundless zeal to honour him. Thus, it makes a man exact and fervent in performing the least ceremonies and rubrics of the Church in the Divine Office, because, animated with this virtue, he can look upon nothing small, in which the service of God is concerned. His care and watchfulness, indeed, are still greater in matters or precepts of a higher nature; but his intention and fervor suffice to give a great value to the least actions he does: for God chiefly considers the heart in every thing.

7. The perfection of religion is, to worship and serve God out of pure love and zeal, for his own sake. God will be worshipped gratis, and loved gratis, i. e. chaste, not because he gives any thing out of himself, but because he gives himself, says St. Austin in Ps. lii. Nothing can be an act of religion, unless it be done out of the proper motive of that virtue, with the most humble subjection and total sacrifice of the soul to God, and in acknowledgment of his supreme majesty and excellency. For which reason the learned Suarez takes notice, l. 1. c. 9. that if a person heard mass on a day commanded, totally out of obedience to the precept of the Church, it would be a mere act of obedience, not of religion, which essentially requires at least a virtual intention of worshipping God for his sovereign excellency; and that chiefly depends upon the intention of the wil.

To understand the words employed in the definition of religion; *Honor is a confession of another's excellency: Glory is an extended reputation with praise: Worship is the testimony of another's excellency, and of the submission of ourselves to him.* Hence a King may honour, but cannot worship his nobles. The

supreme worship appropriated to God alone is called by the *Greeks*, *Latria*: a word applied only to God, in the new testament and the writings of the fathers. That inferior worship which is paid to the blessed saints and angels in heaven is called *Dulia*, as *Bede* observes in *cap. 4, Lucæ*. *St. Austin* takes notice of the same, *l. 10. de civit. c. 1.* where he says the worship due to a creature is not called *latria* by the apostle, *Ephes. vi. 6.* but by another name: which is in that place, *dulia*. To honour, in the saints, their intrinsic perfections, is this inferior worship of *dulia*, which is distinct in its species from the act of religion: but it is a worship of religion, if the sovereign excellency of God be honoured in them.

8. Religion is an universal virtue, which offers to God, and sanctifies all our other actions and virtues. These, if offered to God, and performed with the intention of worshipping him, and as homages to his sovereign excellency, are, by this, made acts of religion. Hence, this is called by the fathers, the foundation of all virtues. *Piety towards God is the beginning of understanding. Piety is the foundation of all virtues*, says *St. Ambrose*, *l. 1. offic. c. 27.* The word piety is, on this account, often used for all virtues; and we call a virtuous true christian, religious. *We say that he only, who is pious and religious, is a true christian*, says *St. Clement of Alexandria in Parrenæsi ad gentes*. For a man, adorned with religion, sacrifices his heart and all his actions to God, and his whole life cannot but be devoted to God, and filled with all suitable virtues and good works, which will each be enhanced and ennobled by the additional dignity and merit of religion, which accompanies them. This is also a virtue which has no bounds. It is founded on a law of justice, to pay to God the homage we owe his sovereign excellency; though as no strict justice can intervene between God and creatures,

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it is not a proper or perfect justice : for creatures can never pay to God a homage proportioned to his greatness, or perfectly honour him as he deserves to be honoured. However religion in this impotency applies itself to the utmost capacity of our soul to honour him on earth, whom the blessed in heaven can never sufficiently honour by their incessant praises, and it borrows the succours of all other virtues, to pay what it owes to its sovereign Lord. A zealous soul adds to every action, the merit of charity and religion, referring both to the love and honour of God.

9. The proper acts of religion are those which contain a protestation and acknowledgment which man makes of his subjection to God, as his sovereign Lord, and those, by which we serve him as our Lord, and obey him as our father. *St. Thomas* counts two interior acts of religion; devotion and prayer.—These are the principal and most excellent. The following are exterior acts of religion: they only belong to religion, as they are referred to the interior: adoration, sacrifice, oblation of the first-fruits, gifts and tithes, a vow, an oath, adjuration, divine praise and thanksgiving. For there are three kinds of goods which man dedicates and subjects himself to God by offering; viz. those of the soul, which are spiritual, by adoration, devotion, prayer, vows and lawful oaths: those of the body, which he subjects to God by exterior acts of adoration joined with the interior, as genuflexions, prostrations, &c. and lastly, exterior goods, of which he is the master, and which are offered to God, either immediately, as in the sacrifices of the old law; or remotely, as when they are given to his ministers, as such.

10. Devotion is a readiness of the soul in all those things which belong to the divine service. Prayer is raising of the mind to God with the petition of things suitable. Adoration is the humbling of
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of ourselves both in mind and body before the sovereign majesty of God. Sacrifice is the supreme exterior homage paid to God, in acknowledgment of his sovereignty, instituted by him. *Gifts, first-fruits and tithes* are offered to God in his ministers. A *vow* is an act, by which we promise and consecrate to God any good work which we afterwards acquit ourselves of. A *lawful oath* is an act, by which, compelled by urgent necessity, we, with the highest reverence, call God, as the sovereign truth, to witness some truth certainly known by us. *Adjuration* is an act, by which we earnestly ask of God some good to our spiritual advantage and to his divine honour, by his infinite goodness and mercy, by the passion of his Son, &c. The *praise of God* is an act by which we celebrate him for his infinite perfection and wonderful works. *Gratitude* is returning of thanks to God for his benefits.

11. But all our actions and other virtues may be made the subjects of this virtue, by being offered to God, and performed for the motives of religion. Religion ought to be the principle of our whole lives; we ought only to live and breathe to God. Hence almsdeeds and all other virtues, will, by being offered to God as homages to acknowledge and honour his supreme excellency; have, besides their own merit, that of religion. Whence *St. James, c. 1. v. 27. Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world.* The same motive will make our ordinary actions, every step we make, and every motion of our heart, perfect sacrifices to honour God, to procure new graces, and obtain fresh crowns of glory in his everlasting inheritance. *If eternal life were to be sold, says St. Clement of Alexandria, speaking of this virtue of religion, Parænet. ad gentes, at how great a price should we offer to buy it? How fervent ought this reflection to make us in the practice*

practice of the acts of religion, to honour God more on earth, and to enlarge our happiness and love for eternity in bliss! Every act of religion will be greater as it is performed with the greater sentiments of the annihilation of ourselves before God, and of glorifying his sovereign majesty and greatness, with all our affections, and with our whole strength.

12. God is not content with mere exterior worship, as bowing, kneeling, &c. *True adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and truth; John iv. 23.* Without this interior, all the exterior is hypocrisy and farce. Where that interior charity is wanting, whatever is done outwardly in sacrifices and prayers, is useless, and like stage-representations; and God is provoked to anger, not appeased by them, says St. Austin, *Enchir.* God is a spirit, and they that adore him, must adore him in spirit and in truth; *John iv. 24.* He has given us a spiritual soul only that we might know him, and pay him a spiritual homage. This the sacrifice of the new law peculiarly points out,—to this the exterior sacrifices of the old law directed.

God made this virtue of religion the basis of all his laws to man, and the first of his commandments. *Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him alone. Mat. iv. 10.* Ah! Was it necessary that God should command me, by an express positive law, to adore him? Is not the voice of nature, and his essential dependence and infinite obligations to his Creator, and his Lord's infinite sovereignty, sufficient to move a rational creature to comply with this first of all duties.

CHAP. II.—ON FAITH.

1. Faith is a theological virtue, by which a soul believes firmly all the truths that God has revealed, upon the motive of his divine revelation. It is a theological virtue, because it's immediate object is God, or his divine revelation. It's principal function is to honour God as the first truth. His holy providence could have given us a clear vision of himself and his mysteries in this mortal life; but then we should not by such a knowledge have made him so honourable an acknowledgment of professing him the sovereign truth, and of humbling and subjecting our reason to it, which is the homage we pay him by an act of faith. Reason is a man's greatest prerogative; it is by it he principally excels brutes and the rest of this lower creation. He is himself sensible of this, and therefore makes this privilege the greatest object of his inordinate pride. We, by faith, make to God the entire sacrifice of it, confessing that our lights are all darkness, and annihilating them, when God speaks. This is a great and an honourable homage which we pay to God, as often as we repeat any act of faith. It is likewise a humiliation of ourselves before God, and a sacrifice of that which is most noble in us. *Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed.*

2. Faith is the belief of truths that are applied to us, with some obscurity. *Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not. Heb. xi. 1.* It is called the *substance* and the *evidence*, because by it's absolute firmness and certitude, we already possess and hold the goods to come: but then it is of goods which are yet absent and invisible to us. *Hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for? Rom. viii. 24.* If it were grounded upon evidence, how would it be free? Where would be it's merit,

rit, it's excellence, or it's sacrifice: Therefore has Almighty God been pleased to conduct us by authority; but by an authority the most certain and irrefragable; by an authority which reason itself commands us to subject our understanding to, reason which meets with mysteries in every object on earth, and work of nature. *You calumniate invincible things*, said St. Hilary to the Arians: *I ask of you a reason of those that are visible.* Content to own your own ignorance in your own concerns, you are insolently curious and presumptuous in those of God. When the heretic Eunomius pretended to fathom the bottomless abyss of the divinity, St. Basil desires him, before he put such a question, to explain to him only the nature of an ant. *ep.* 168. *p.* 629. Nothing is more worthy the infinite greatness of God, than that his mysteries are incomprehensible to us, and above our reason, though never contrary to it. And nothing can be more just than that we should believe the divine revelation. We are governed by authority and belief in natural things when we do not see them, as St. Austin elegantly shews in an express book on this subject, *l. de fide rerum, t.* 6. *p.* 145. and shall we not acquiesce in the assurance of eternal truth? The testimony of God suffices to silence all human reasoning, and to stop it's idle curiosity. St. Chrysostom having explained how Christ is co-eternal with the Father, cries out: *You will say, how can this be, seeing he is the Son? We speak of God, and do you ask, how? And do you not fear and tremble? If any one were to ask you how the soul and body reunited, will enjoy eternal life, you would laugh at the question; because our mind is not to enquire, but to believe, and not to examine a thing, the demonstration whereof is the power of him who affirms it.—Why do you search into things which cannot be fathomed? Why do you inquire into matters which do not fall under our faculties or inquiry? * Search the original of the rays*

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of the sun; you cannot discover it; yet bear the weakness of your understanding. Why are you bold and rash in greater things? &c. *St. Chrysof. hom. 7. al. 6. in Joan. ed. Montf. p. 45, 46. t. 8.* Nothing is worse than to pretend to measure divine things by reason, says the same *St. Chrysostom, Hom. 2. in 2 Tim. p. 69.* For so a man surely falls from the foundation of faith, is thrown afloat, and forsaken by the light. If a man who would fix his sight upon the sun, will be so far from being able to see it, that he will lose his own sight, and also suffer much: far more will he do so who boldly seeks to fix his eyes on the eternal light of God, and presumes to attain it by mortal reason. See him again *Hom. 13. in Matt. p. 175, 3, 7.* It is then the essential property of faith, to bring into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ; *2 Cor. x. 5.* and its chief disposition is humble simplicity, which far excels in the eyes of God, all the pompous pride of philosophers, from whose hearts he conceals his holy truths and mysteries, revealing them only to the little ones, *Luke x. 21.* The reward of this obscure belief is the clear vision of God and his great truths in the revelation of his glory.

3. The assent of faith, though obscure, is most certain, and more so than the most clear truths or first principles of natural evidence. For, though the assent in these be most certain in the order of nature, that of faith is more firm, being in a supernatural order; produced by grace in the soul, and grounded more immediately on the sovereign truth of God. For, though reason and evidence draw all its truth and certainty from him its author; yet it is more impossible that God should deceive by himself, or by his own direct revelation, than by another, which is a means instituted by him indeed, but distinct from himself. We have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: *2 Peter*

i. 19. The motive of faith is the word, or testimony and assurance of God, who is the supreme truth, and can neither deceive nor be deceived. All other things we believe, either upon the relation of our senses; which are often fallacious, or of our reason, so weak, short-sighted, and subject to illusion. But, the certainty of faith is of a superior order, being founded on a higher motive, viz. on God himself. And where his testimony is sufficiently applied, it is a criminal infidelity not to receive it with a firm assent: for, to hesitate, or to entertain the least deliberate doubt about any one article, is entirely to lose the gift of faith, and to become an infidel. All the articles of faith resting upon the same motive, the testimony of God, to reject it knowingly in one, is to reject it in all; and to believe by fancy, not by the rule of God's authority and revelation. *You who in the gospel believe what you please, and do not believe what you please, believe yourselves rather than the gospel, says St. Austin, l. 17. contra Faust. c. 3. t. 8. p. 307.* Faith is always one, always the same, always unchangeable, as *Tertullian* observes, *l. de veland. virginibus*, and the same of all ages and times from Christ to the end of the world: for the Church cannot add one tittle to what Christ taught her.

4. The assent of faith is solely founded on the divine revelation, or the unerring testimony of God manifesting itself to us. Other conditions go before, and remove obstacles out of the heart, apply the revelation to us, and banish all rashness or levity in our assent. These are called the motives of credibility, but are not properly dispositions to faith: for, being only natural, they can be no dispositions to an act which is supernatural. The principal of these are the evidence of the ancient prophecies; the confirmation of incontestable miracles; the sanctity of its sublime doctrine, and of many of its followers; the wonderful manner of its propaga-

tion, with the destruction of vice and idolatry; the troops of martyrs who must have known its truth, especially the first of them, and who sealed it with their blood; the testimony of so many great men, doctors, philosophers, anchorets, virgins, &c. whose admirable lives alone must remove all possibility of doubt. Such a cloud of witnesses of all ages, sexes and nations, men of so great learning, probity and capacity, who could not but be assured of what they testified, must shut the mouths of the most hardened unbelievers.

5. Faith is a supernatural virtue, and a special gift of God, infused into our souls by a particular grace, as *St. Austin* has composed large books to shew, and as the Church has defined in several councils against the *Semipelagians* who ascribed the beginning of faith to ourselves. *By grace you are saved through faith. For, it is the gift of God. Eph. xi. 8. Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. Phil. i. 29. Not that we are sufficient to think any thing of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God. 2 Cor. iii. 5. If we are not able to think, certainly we are not able to believe as from ourselves, as St. Austin reasons, l. de præd. 35 ff. c. 2.* That virtue, which is the seed and the foundation of all supernatural actions, virtues and life, must necessarily be itself a supernatural gift, and consequently cannot be acquired by the industry of nature, without grace: *Whose heart the Lord opened, to attend to those things which were said by St. Paul. Acts xvi. 14.* Hence, there can be no true faith in the devils or damned souls, which are stripped of gifts and graces, and retain no virtue, though they believe by the conviction of what they feel.

6. Faith is the foundation and beginning of a supernatural life. It is the root from which all supernatural virtues and good works, all the seeds of immortality rise and are nourished. By it we receive

receive the power of being made the sons of God. *John i. 12.* By it we are born of God. 1 *John v. 1.* Christ attributes to it the remission of sins; also the power of working the most stupendous miracles is its effect. *Mat. xxi. Mark xi. Luke xvii. &c.* Abraham was justified through faith. All the patriarchs and saints pleased God, did such wonders on earth, and were saved by it. Read the enumeration made by *St. Paul. Heb. xi.* For charity and all other virtues are only pushed up and draw their increase from it. We admire a great tree, its bulky trunk, its spreading branches, its numberless flowers and delicious fruit; and we see that all this wonderful glory of the earth is produced and nourished from its root. So it is in regard to faith; which is the plant from the seed, or rather the root which produces, and continually feeds all true virtues and sanctity of life. *Faith is the solid foundation of all virtues, says St. Ambrose in Ps. 40.* And the same Father cries out: *O faith, richer than all treasures! more excellent than all qualifications! more healing and sovereign than all physicians! l. de virginibus, c. 3.* We admire the confidence, the zeal, the charity of the saints: but let us remember that the ardor of their faith gave those virtues their birth and all their vigour. We are strangers to those happy effects, because so weak in faith.

Faith is the light which directs us through the dark paths of this life to a glorious eternity; it was prefigured by that pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day, which conducted the *Israelites* through the desert into the land of promise; for it is a great light, but mixed with darkness and obscurity; and it points out to us the happy land of the living.

7. The absolute necessity of holy faith unto life everlasting again recommends it. Without this virtue we love only the earth, we act only on earthly motives, we know only the earth and its false goods,

goods, we live only for the earth; and are, with our works, affections and thoughts, altogether earthly. Faith translates us into a new life, and directs our hearts and actions to new and more noble objects, and makes all our works and affections supernatural, heavenly and agreeable sacrifices to God. Unless we know and love God as the author of grace and refer our actions to him in this quality, nothing of them can merit that glory which is supernatural, and which can never be obtained but by virtues and acts which are of the same supernatural order. Hence, though an infidel may perform some moral good actions, as of alms out of fraternal compassion, or for God, as the author of nature, he can do nothing profitable to eternal life, without faith. *He that believeth not shall be condemned. Mark xvi. 16. Without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him. Heb. xi. 6.* The apostle makes this the principal scope of his epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Ephesians. *The just man lives from faith. Hab. ii. 2.*

8. Hence we learn the enormity of sins against faith, which, by destroying it in the soul, destroys the very foundation of justification and salvation. Such is the crime of *infidelity*, which is a denying the whole system of the gospel revelation, which is one of the most enormous and most pernicious of all sins, as it entirely separates a man from God, and all true knowledge of him, his mysteries and his holy law. Though infidelity is not of itself a sin, if it be invincible, that is, if a person could never come to the knowledge of God's revelation. Such a one, indeed, cannot be saved without divine faith: to which, either God will bring him, or he will be damned for his original and actual sins. Such a crime likewise is *heresy*, which is an obstinate error in matters of faith. For, he who obstinately denies one point loses entirely faith, and believes the

the rest only by human persuasion: This is a sin next a kin to infidelity. It is reckoned amongst the deadly sins, Gal. v. 19. 2. or xiii. 2. 2 Peter ii. 1. 1 John ii. 18. 2 John 17. Jude 12, 13. Saint Irenæus l. 3. c. 3. writes: *The apostles and their disciples dreaded this evil so much that they would never have any commerce, even in words only, with those who had adulterated the truth.* John the disciple of the Lord in Ephesus going to bathe, as soon as he spied Cerinthus in it, leaped out of the bath without bathing, saying, he was afraid lest the bath should fall, whilst Cerinthus the enemy of faith was within. And Polycarpe, his chief disciple, when Marcion one day met and asked him, if he did not know him, answered, I know you to be the devil's eldest son. The celebrated Middleton is indeed angry at this relation, but is not able to discredit it. Nor is it stronger than the apostle's words. *If any man come to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor salute him.* 2 John 10. What doctrine, says the ancient Vincent of Lerins, but the Catholic, the universal, that which remains one and the same through all the successions of ages, by the unspotted tradition of the truth? St. Paul says; *A man that is a heretic avoid, after the first and second admonition.* Tit. iii. 10. But as heresy is an obstinate error, this crime is not incurred, if the error be invincible. Whence St Austin writes thus; *No one can doubt but that we are to give an account of our faith as well as of our practice, and that a wilful corruption of it, which has not the plea of invincible ignorance, must be a crime.*

9. As a gardener gives his principal application to the cultivating of the roots of his plants; so the first care of a Christian ought to be to cultivate most diligently in his soul holy faith, the root of all virtues conducing to eternal life; for the stronger and deeper and more lively this is, the larger branches and better fruit will be produced from it. It was by the perfection of their faith, that the saints
were

were able to remove mountains. *By faith they conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put armies to flight.* Heb. xi. 33, 34. If a worldly spirit, disorder and sin now reigns so much among Christians, this calamity is owing to the want of faith. For, though they believe firmly, yet they are not penetrated with the great truths which they believe, and they are strangers to the impressions which they ought to produce in their hearts.

How is our faith to be strengthened and the source of so great evils to be remedied? The first means is, to beg humbly of God the gift of perfect faith; for it must be his grace. We must therefore pray with the apostles; *Increase our faith,* Luke xvii. 5. and with the father of the boy brought to Jesus, possessed by a dumb spirit, who cried out with tears; *I believe, Lord; help my unbelief.* Mark ix. 23. It is God who must open our heart to believe, as he did that of Lydia. Acts xvi. 14.

We must, secondly, prepare ourselves to receive it by perfect humility, simplicity and docility of heart. *For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* 1 Cor. i. 25. It is always pride that begets apostates and heretics, and makes men curiously pry into what is above them. We stand not in need of curiosity after Christ's testimony, nor of inquiry after the gospel, says Tertullian, *l. de prefer.* If we are molested with temptations of infidelity, we must raise our hearts calmly to Christ, by a firm act of faith and prayer, as saying with Hugh of St. Victor; *Lord, if I am deceived, you yourself must have deceived me; for my faith is recommended by those signs which can only come from you.* Under the temptation, we must carefully avoid entering into any disputation with others, or within our own minds; for the devil is an

an artful disputant; and we, at such times, labour under a bias. Our arms must then be vigorous, resistance and prayer. When our minds are calm, we may apply them with prudent advice to the proper motives.

10. Repeating frequent acts of faith is another essential means. Every virtue is strengthened by the fervent repetition of its acts. So must faith. By them, our hearts relish more and more its mysteries, and grow daily *stronger in faith*, 1 Peter v. *In which shield they may extinguish all the fiery darts of the enemy.*

Moreover actual faith is an indispensable homage which we owe to God, and a necessary condition of salvation, as all Christians agree. *You who fear God, believe him. Eccl. ii.* Hence divines unanimously teach, that an omission of acts of faith, hope or charity, is a mortal sin; First, when children first attain the use of reason, the sacrifice and first-fruits of which they are bound immediately to make to God by the exercise of the three theological virtues, so that the omission be not of any moral delay. Hence we see the particular obligation of parents and pastors, that children before that time should have learned the chief mysteries of faith, especially the unity and trinity of God, and the incarnation of the Son of God, and also to recite their prayers, and with the greatest attention their age is capable of, that they may convert the first dawning of their reason to adore God.

Secondly. These acts oblige immediately after any sin against faith, &c. to repair the injury done to God by it, and restore him our hearts. Likewise, *thirdly*, When any dangerous temptation against faith assaults the soul; and, *fourthly*, in any probable danger. For then a man is most strictly obliged to turn himself to God, to make him the sacrifice of himself by these supernatural virtues, and to arm himself with the shield of faith against the raging

enemy. *This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith.* 1 John v.

Moreover, it is a most adviseable devotion, always to form such acts with the greatest fervor, when we prepare ourselves to receive any of the sacraments; and on all sundays and principal festivals; both to honour God by this indispensable homage of his divine worship; to sanctify our souls, which the exercise of these virtues does above any others; also to excite and nourish devotion in our hearts.

There is farther a strict precept that these acts be so frequent and continual, that our whole life may be influenced and governed by actual faith, that a man may live by faith. *Rom.* For these are to be the vital acts of his spiritual supernatural life, as breathing is to the body. Whence the faithful are to be admonished never to forget them in their morning and evening devotions. *Faith is the beginning of human salvation. Without this, no one can come to the society of the children of God; because, without it, no one obtains the grace of justification in this life, nor shall possess eternal life in that to come, says St. Austin, Serm. 38. de temp. and the fathers call faith the root of justice and perfection.*

11. The conditions which are to accompany our acts of faith, are, first, that we profess explicitly the firm belief of some supernatural truths or mysteries, as, in the first place, that God is our supernatural end, and the author of grace and eternal glory. This fundamental article, with that of our redemption through Christ, ought to be assented to explicitly in all acts of faith: other chief articles ought explicitly to enter them sometimes, as on the effects of the sacraments, when we receive them, or by summing up the principal mysteries which are revealed to us, which we do by the creeds. We are to profess an implicit belief of all the other articles of our holy faith, whatever
 God

God has revealed to us by his holy church, which he has established the pillar and ground-work of his truth, and the depositary of his sacred mysteries and holy word. For we receive them from Christ, not as his apostles did, immediately from his own mouth, but by the channel of his church. This we may consider in two distinct capacities; first, as it is merely an illustrious body of men, deserving credit, by their succession through all ages, their sanctity, learning, death, &c. Considered thus, it is a motive to heathens and infidels, leading them to the assent of our holy faith, and ranked among those which we call motives of credibility, which made infidelity inexcusable, even to reason and human prudence. *Thy testimonies are made exceeding credible. Ps. xcii. 5.* In this capacity the church recommends to us the holy scriptures and all the other objects of our faith; but is not itself one of them, being only an introduction to faith. It is considered by faith, when it is embraced in a second capacity, viz. as the unerring spouse of Christ, and the depositary, sure guide and teacher of all his holy truths, which it received from him and proposes to us, to be assented to by us, without any danger of erring, as she is under the guidance and influence of his divine spirit, who has given us his assurance, that he will always direct and preserve this holy church which he himself planted with his own hand, against all the powers of hell, to the end of the world, that it be always a secure pasture of truth and salvation to our souls, and that his holy worship be never defiled or banished from amongst men whom he redeemed. We may consider the church in either or both of these capacities, especially the latter, when we assent to all that Christ has revealed to us by it.

12. Another essential condition in all acts of faith, is the motive on which we found our assent in them, which must be no other than the divine

revelation or testimony, which is the act of his unerring will manifesting his mysteries to us by some exterior known sign, as by prophecy. This revelation is applied to us by the external motives of credibility, and the testimony of the Church; but none of those external motives ground our faith. Its assent is solely and firmly grounded on the divine testimony or revelation. Hence, to believe on the testimony of men, or even of miracles, would only be a human faith, and a natural assent. Those natural motives may shew us the revelation; but divine faith grounds its assent solely on the divine authority. This all Christians ought to be carefully instructed in: and for this purpose, it is proper that the motive should be sometimes expressed in the acts of faith, that we believe, because God has revealed it, who is the sovereign truth, and can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Tho' acts of faith are necessarily implied in all attentive prayer, we ought to make them often expressly, as by saying the creed in the mean time. Dilating our hearts in pious affections of adoration, love, thanksgiving, petition, &c. Or we may sometimes recite the summary of the chief articles of our faith, with acts of adoration, sometimes of love, of supplication, or the like, repeated in our hearts at each article.

13. The fruits of the Holy Ghost contribute exceedingly to the perfection of faith, especially spiritual science and wisdom which teaches to understand, relish, and penetrate heavenly truths, piety, and the fear of the Lord; which are the effects of mortification and assiduous prayer and meditation. The soul, by receiving these gifts, lights and affections more abundantly, and by advancing in humility and simplicity of heart before God, grows every day more perfect in holy faith. The practice of good works is likewise a necessary and great means to increase our faith, as the disciples going to Emmaus

maus were enlightened by doing, though they had not been by hearing or by prayer. The exercise of virtue perfects the will to be docile to faith, and removes the obstacles with which self-love and creatures fill it. The understanding is prepared to faith, for both the powers of the soul are employed in an assent of faith; the will to command and the understanding to form it. The understanding, I say, is prepared to faith, by considering the motives of credibility: for the study of those motives in the spirit, not of distrust and curiosity, but of humility and piety, will not diminish but increase the merit of our faith. For we only meditate them for a sincere desire to perfect this holy faith in our hearts, and out of a great love of its mysteries, *which fill us with peace and joy in believing.* And, though faith be obscure, yet the motives which lead us to it have a sufficient evidence, and shew that the testimonies of the Lord are most worthy of our belief.

14. The marks of a great faith, which are likewise its acts to increase it, are a high esteem and love of it, an ardent zeal to defend and propagate it, the greatest abhorrence of heresy or voluntary error in it, a perfect and joyful submission to the Church, a firm hope and confidence in God, like *Abraham*, who ready by faith, to sacrifice his son, still trusted firmly in the promises of God. *Heb. ii. 7;* A perfect charity and the most fervent practice of good works, a faithful observance of God's commandments. How do our lives deny the practical points of our religion, the contempt of the world, of riches and pleasures; the love of crosses and humiliations, and the like? Are not we, in our maxims and manners a scandal to Christ? A certain lady presenting herself to *St. Francis de Sales*, to be received into his order of the Visitation, begged he would receive the abjuration of her heresy. The saint was surprized; but she answered;
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I have indeed always professed the Catholic faith; but only by halves: for, till now, I always believed riches and pleasures a happiness.

CHAP. III.—ON THE QUALITIES OF FAITH, AND
ON CATECHISM.

1. Faith is not lost by mortal sin. This virtue still remains in sinners, who have not renounced it by apostacy. But it is in them a dead faith, or as divines say, a faith without its form or soul, which is charity; a faith which will never save men, as *St. James* expressly wrote, to shew against some who pretended, from the great commendations which *St. Paul* had given faith, that it sufficed alone to salvation: but he spake of an active faith, of a faith that worketh by charity, *Gal. v. 6*. For he expressly declares: *If I should have all faith, so that I should remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 1 Cor. xiii. 2*. And *St. James*; *What shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? James ii. 14*. He proves at length that *Abraham* and the other patriarchs were justified, not by faith alone, but by a faith which produced good works. It is by them that we give the testimony or proof of our faith. *Shew me thy faith without works; and I will shew thee, by works, my faith. ib. v. 18*. He compares such an inactive faith to the fruitless knowledge which the devils have of God. *Thou believest that there is one God. The devils also believe and tremble. v. 19*. He calls it a dead faith: *Even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also, faith without works, is dead. v. 26*. Faith without works is, as it were, a lamp without oil, says *St. Cyril of Jerusalem*. *St. Bernard* writes of it; *You offer to God a dead gift. Do you honor him with a stinking present? Do you please him*

him by becoming the murtherer of your own faith? *Serm. 24. in Cant.* And *St. Cyril of Alexandria*; *If any one, after baptism, returns to sin, he, as it were, murders his faith within his own breast; in Malachi, c. 4. p. 43.*

2. Faith is the principle of all supernatural actions. Infidels may exercise, without it, certain moral virtues, which may deserve some temporal recompence in this world, as *St. Austin* says, *de civit. Dei, l. 5. c. 12. and 15.* God gave to the Romans the empire of the world, in reward for their ancient parsimony and virtue. But they can never merit any reward in heaven; for, only faith can raise them to a supernatural order, and to the dignity of meriting eternal life. On the other hand; Faith, without good works, will only serve to condemn us much more severely, as it makes our transgression more criminal and more inexcusable. It is in vain we call ourselves the spiritual seed of *Abraham*, or the disciples of *Christ*, if we practise not his precepts, and are not governed by his spirit. We dishonour God, disgrace the sacred name we bear, and profane the holy religion we profess. We owe both to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, a suitable sanctity of manners, and a life conformable to our faith. God has done us the high honour, and shewn us the unspeakable mercy of choosing us to be members of his church. Gratitude and obedience oblige us in a particular manner to live as his sons and servants, that he may not be offended by those who are most of all others bound to love and honour him. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven, *Mat. v. 16.* We are bound to glorify God by our conduct and actions, which, if we neglect, we dishonour him, by usurping the sacred name of belonging to his family. A certain great Prince said to an unworthy relation, that he begged he would
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either change his name or his manners, at least not to affect his illustrious family with the infamy of his vices. So does God reproach Catholics, who are such in name only.

3. They moreover disgrace their religion, and ruin their neighbours souls. Every son of the Church owes to it a zeal, and his best prayers, endeavours and labours for its exaltation and propagation, for which he professes himself ready to suffer all manner of torments and death. How base would it be for a son to fight against his own mother, and this whilst he professed the most dutiful and sacred piety and obedience! This, wicked livers in the Church are guilty of. They destroy, by their manners, that Church of which they are members, and render fruitless, in regard to many souls, all the labours of many apostolic preachers, the pernicious influence of their example, being far more prevalent than the contrary zeal of holy pastors in building. They are unnatural sons, who tear out the bowels of their own mother; they are unfaithful soldiers, who insult the banners which they have the honour to carry; they are ungrateful miscreants, who expose their Father's mysteries with which they are intrusted, to the jest, raillery and blasphemies of his enemies.

We owe this edification of our manners, not only to the Church, but also to the souls of all our neighbours. The force of example in all things is absolutely incredible; and every one is to watch over all his actions, lest he become in any of them a scandal or stumbling block to his neighbour. We are all, as it were, lamps placed on the candlesticks of the Church; we are a spectacle to all with whom we converse, and we diffuse an odour, either to life or to death: Did Christians universally practise and live up to the sanctity of their religion, there would not remain one unbeliever in the world. The beauty, the harmony and the lustre of the
Church

Church resulting from the virtue of all its members, would be so strong an attractive, that no obstinacy could be able to resist it. On the contrary, the heathens of the Indies openly alledge our lives as the excuse of their infidelity; and our erring neighbours, who regard our actions more than our words, take occasion from our manners, to reproach our religion; unjustly indeed, but woe to him through whom this scandal comes. We owe this duty likewise to ourselves, and to our own souls.

4. Wilful infidelity is a prodigy of obstinacy and blindness, as it resists the strongest motives and lights of reason, and this for human respects, or for the sake of singularity and pride, without any plausible arguments to alledge. But it is another prodigy that any man should believe, yet detain truth in injustice, and live like a heathen. He stands self-condemned, and pronounces as many sentences against himself as he makes professions of his faith, which serves only to exaggerate the ingratitude and malice of his guilt. Surprizing! that the divine judgments which he believes should not awake him: nor the knowledge of his obligations make some impressions upon his heart: that he should, with his eyes open, precipitate himself into so frightful a gulf. All our actions are seeds of eternity. The least of them will not lose its reward, *Mat. x. 42.* but will shine to endless eternities. *Dan. xxii.* *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away.* *Mat. xi. 12.* *What a man has sown, that he shall also reap.* *Gal. vi. 7.* *He who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly: and he who sows in abundance, shall reap also in benedictions of plenty.* *2 Cor. ix. 6.* If a merchant were placed in such circumstances that he could acquire every moment new estates, how earnest would he be to lose no part of that precious time? How would he regret, even the hours necessarily lost in sleep? Alas! cries out *St. Bonaventure, Serm. 3. de ascens.*

p. 341. *With what pains does the countryman manure and till the ground for the fruit of one year! and we labour for eternal crowns,; yet are slothful.* If any body should tell us, and we believed him, that a great treasure was hid in our garden, we should certainly use all our endeavours to find it out; and if we did not, it would be a sign that we did not seriously believe it. We may say the same of heaven or hell. Was our faith such as it ought to be, we could not neglect this affair as we do. Nor should we snarl at providence, and turn ourselves into all the postures of impatience when any affliction befalls us, if we truly looked upon it as a wise holy order of our merciful God, and a seed of immense glory.

5. We are bound not only inwardly to believe, but also exteriorly profess our faith, placing our glory in it. *He that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed when he shall come in his majesty. Luke ix. 26. With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation. Rom. x. 10.* This our public profession is glorious and honourable to the divine majesty, and a justice we owe to the truth. It is an exterior act of religion and faith. In these sentiments we are to recite our creed in public prayers with the greatest attention and reverence. But prudence is here necessary: for we ought not to publish God's sacred truths, where it would only expose them to the raillery of unbelievers, and give an indiscreet occasion to their blasphemies. But there are two cases in which we are obliged to make a public profession of our faith. *First*, if God's honour; *Secondly*, if our neighbour's good require it. The first happens, if a Christian be called upon, by any public authority, whether just or unjust, to give an account of his religion. For, to be then silent would be to be ashamed of Christ before men, to rob him of his honour, and

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to prefer the world to him. And this is clear from the doctrine of the Church and practice of the martyrs. The second case happens, if another be in danger of denying his faith, unless he be publicly encouraged, or instructed, or of his concealing his religion, some scandal will be given to others, or an occasion to the infidels of more boldly insulting the faith. When nothing of this occurs, it is lawful to conceal our faith among its adversaries, even if asked by them; providing it be not any ways denied, or any thing done, even tacitly against it. It is likewise lawful to fly in a persecution, unless a pastor be obliged to reside for the comfort of his flock, &c. as appears from Christ's express words, *Mat. x. 23*. He himself fled into *Egypt*; and again, when the *Jews* were going to stone him. *St. Peter* fled out of prison, and *St. Paul* out of *Damascus*. Read *St. Athanasius's* apology for his flight, and *St. Austin, ep. 228. ib. 180*.

It is always a grievous apostacy to deny a man's faith by words or sign. It is an enormous crime even to use any such dissimulation, by which others will think a person has denied his faith, which was the sin of the *Libellatics* condemned by the *Roman* Clergy, and by *St. Cyprian*, who obtained from the judges false certificates that they had sacrificed. He interpretatively denies his faith who does any thing which is in itself lawful, but which is regarded by the persecutors as a denial of our faith, or is exacted by them, in contempt of our holy religion; all lies in things in which religion is concerned, though never so small in themselves, are, in a matter of weight, and grievous mortal sins; as any false quotation of holy scripture; any lie or forgery about a miracle, reliques of saints, &c. Faith requires in us a twofold duty, of the heart and of the mouth; nor can we be saved, unless we profess our faith by our mouth, which we carry in our hearts, says *St. Austin, l. de fide & symb. c. 1*.

7. Faith must have three qualities. 1. It must be *firm*, never admitting the least doubt or wavering in any point; and so constant that no worldly flatteries, pleasures or prosperity may ever weaken it; nor its threats or persecutions shock it. Dangers, torments or death must not be able to shake it, as it filled the patriarchs and martyrs with confidence and joy under the most affrighting trials; triumphing in them over fires and the sword. By it, the first Christians *took with joy the being stripped of their goods, knowing that they had a better and a more lasting substance. Heb. x. 34.* By it, and for its sake, the ancient servants of God *were stoned, cut asunder, tempted, put to death by the sword; wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in depths and caves of the earth. Heb. xi. 37. and 38.*

8. A second property of faith is, that it be entire, receiving every article which the Catholic Church teaches. He who wilfully errs in any one point, destroys his assent of faith in his whole belief; because he rejects the motive upon which the whole rests, *viz.* the divine authority of the revelation. Thus as one mortal sin destroys charity, so one obstinate error destroys the whole fabric of faith; but not an error of ignorance, which is excusable or invincible, which is accompanied with the pious motion of true faith, and submission of the will to its holy motives. Hence, obstinate or wilful heretics or infidels may have a natural, human or historical faith of any points of the Christian revelation, grounded on its motives of credibility, or on their own fancy, which chooses truth just as it in other things chooses error; but they have no divine or theological faith, which is a supernatural virtue, grace and gift of God, infused by him into our souls, and residing habitually in us by his conservation. Infants receive this habit of
faith

faith in baptism; by which they are made faithful or believers before they are capable of actual faith, which habit is only lost by actual apostacy or heresy. The adult may receive this habit or permanent gift of faith before baptism; but it can only be communicated to us by a supernatural gift or infusion of God.

9. The third quality of faith is, that it be active. For, if it be barren of its fruit, which are good works, it cannot be profitable to those who have it, and will only serve to condemn them, and is called by *St. James* a carcase without the soul. It was a lively faith which drew so many great men into deserts, made others prefer cells and poverty to thrones; encouraged others joyfully to condemn themselves to the most austere penitential lives, and made the martyrs embrace cheerfully racks and gibbets; and all the saints exult in their crosses and humiliations, as having found in them the most inestimable treasures. *St. Serapion the Sinite* having given all to the poor, even his clothes, except one thin linen garment, and a book of the gospels, was asked on a very cold day; Why he was so thinly clad? To which, shewing his book of the gospel, he answered, *This has stripped me*. If we look into ourselves, we shall find our faith must be very weak, imperfect and inactive. We must study earnestly to strengthen and increase it by prayer, meditation, and the heroic practice of virtue. The path of the just is a light growing till perfect day; that is, our faith is increasing till it leads us to its term and everlasting recompence,—the clear vision of God in glory. But it carries along with it also a present benediction, filling our hearts with a perpetual feast, a continual fund of overflowing comfort, joy, peace, and firm hope, which is our present support. *Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound*

in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. Rom. x. 13.

10. The indispensable necessity and incomparable advantages of actual faith shew the instruction of all in the Christian Doctrine or Catechism, to be the strictest and first of all obligations. Without the actual faith and supernatural knowledge of God, as the justifier of our souls, and our eternal rewarder, no one ever could obtain justification or salvation, either under the law of nature, or the Mosaic dispensations: nor, moreover, without a faith in him as our Redeemer from the sins, though the knowledge of the means of this redemption was not in all, or equally explicit. Since the promulgation of the gospel, there is a like absolute necessity that all distinctly know the unity and trinity of God, and the incarnation and death of the Son of God for our redemption, as the best divines teach and prove from holy scripture and the tradition of the Church. *There is no other name but that of Christ in which men may be saved. Acts iv. 12. All are struck by the serpent, and can only be healed, by looking on, and believing in him. John iii. 14. He that doth not believe is already judged; because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John iii. 18.* In the conversion of infidels, it seems the most proper method, to begin their instruction by the moral precepts of the law of nature, the last things, especially the future judgment, the Lord's prayer, and lastly, those sublime mysteries, to which they will be thus gradually prepared, as *Lewis of Granada* shews in his book *on the method of catechizing among the Indians*; and this was followed by the fathers, as we see in their catechistic discourses still extant. But children who already have faith, are to be instructed in the most essential articles first, which are these of which we speak, without the distinct belief of which

which no adult is a christian, nor is capable of grace and justification, or of receiving worthily any sacrament. Whoever has received any in such an ignorance, even though it should have been inculpable, which is impossible in such, he is obliged to repeat the confessions he has made in that state of ignorance.

11. All are obliged to know and to understand the apostles creed, with the articles which it contains, the commandments of God and the Church, the Lord's prayer, and the sacraments, especially baptism, the blessed eucharist and penance, as is often inculcated by the fathers and councils, and is sufficiently clear from the nature of our holy religion. All are bound to acquire a knowledge of these and other articles of our faith, more or less distinct, according to their state, profession, capacity and other circumstances. But what has been said regards the most simple amongst the faithful. Those that are capable, are obliged to instruct themselves in the mysteries of their religion, more to the bottom. Those who live in a voluntary ignorance of their religion, out of sloth and negligence, reject the holy knowledge of God and of his truths, and have the most terrible judgments to fear at his tribunal. Every one can find sometime for trifling amusements, for idle conversation, or for temporal concerns. Shall that alone which requires our whole attention, find no moments in the day or week? Parents are solicitous to procure for their children, a temporal establishment and all necessities for this life; and can they leave their souls destitute of their most essential spiritual assistance; an early instruction in the knowledge of God and their duty? Pastors tremble, if they hear any of their flock died without the sacraments; yet are not solicitous that all are perfectly instructed in their holy religion, though this neglect is far more pernicious and enormous a crime, and the most certain

certain ruin and damnation of those unhappy souls. We may call it the first duty of pastors, in regard to their flock, of parents as to their children, and of masters over their servants, that they be perfectly instructed in the Christian Doctrine, and this early, as soon as children can speak, that they may convert their tender hearts to God when they first come to the use of reason.

12. Catechism teaches the greatest, the most necessary, and the most sublime of all sciences. Without faith, man is a riddle to himself. He finds himself in a state of darkness and misery, under the weight of sin; but knows not whence he came, whither he is going, or why he is placed here; or by what means he is to seek the remedies he stands in need of. Faith is the light from heaven, which discovers all this to him. It teaches him what the philosophers could never find out, and the poorest christian idiot can answer satisfactorily from his catechism, those necessary, important queries which a *Plato* and an *Aristotle* knew nothing of. Faith teaches us our own happiness, and the means to attain it; it teaches us God and his most adorable mysteries; it is the participation of his secrets which he communicates to us. The heathen philosophers boasted that they would teach men happiness, and to live well. But this only he can discover to us, who came from heaven to be the light, the salvation, and the life of the world. Let them dispute on virtues and vices, dividing, defining, reasoning, sharply concluding, setting off their science with pompous words, who durst even cry out; Follow us, embrace our sect, if you desire to live well; yet they entered not by the gate; so came to destroy, to sacrifice, to murder, as *St. Austin* says of them. *Tr. 45. in Joan.* The christian revelation teaches us clearly all this; and shall we condemn its sacred school? Christ himself brought this doctrine from heaven. *The only be-*
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gotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him to us. John i. 18. The Queen of the South came from the bounds of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: behold more than Solomon here. John xii. 42. After God has sent his prophets and his only Son to teach us, woe to us if we neglect so great a salvation.

13. Some think it a mean office to instruct the ignorant and children in the rudiments of faith. But what employ can be more meritorious to ourselves, more proper to promote the honour of God or the salvation of our neighbour? By it we exercise the most excellent acts, both of charity and humility. Nothing more serviceable to our neighbour; nothing, as Pope *Paul III.* says in his first Bulls of approbation of the Society, *more fruitful or profitable to his salvation:* for, to teach the rudiments of faith, is to lay the foundation of christianity; it is to plant the seeds of true piety, in the manner in which they will be sure to produce the greatest fruit. Were but the great truths of religion pressing upon tender minds in a suitable manner, the impression they would make would be lasting and deep; and such children would, both by their example and reproofs, be a curb to vice in others, and growing up, be a comfort to their parents, and a public benefit to the church and state. A good catechist contributes more to the public peace and happiness than all the laws and magistrates. This employment, above all others, promotes the divine honour, in preserving tender souls from the early contagion of vice, and in helping to consecrate the first-fruits of their hearts to God, and lay a deep foundation of a virtuous life. *St. Austin, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril,* and all the most eminent doctors, and greatest popes and bishops, thought it a high branch of their duty to catechize. *St. Paul* said; *I am a debtor to the wise and to the unwise. Rom. i. 14.* All the apostles, what did they

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travel over the whole world to do else? We become little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children: so desirous of you, we would gladly impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls. 1 *Theff.* ii. 7, 8. I am made all to all that I may gain all. Nay, our Lord himself made this his great employment; The spirit of the Lord is upon me.—He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor. *Luke* iv. 18. The learned and holy doctor John Gerson, the most celebrated Chancellor of Paris, wrote a golden book, on drawing little ones to Christ. He employed all his life, a great part of his time in teaching children their catechism; and after he returned from the council of *Constance*, retiring to the city of *Lyons*, he assembled there every day all the children in the church of *St. Paul*, and taught them their catechism. When he was near death, he caused all the children to meet together in the church, and to cry out and often repeat; My God, my Creator, have pity on thy poor servant John Gerson. Our Saviour himself testified his delight in assisting that innocent age, when he said; Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God—and embracing them, and laying his hands upon them, he blessed them. *Mark* x. 14, 16. The Popes *St. Pius V.* anno 1571, *Ex debito*, Bullar. t. 2. p. 345. and *Paul V.* anno 1607, *Ex credito*, Bull. t. 3. p. 223. erected a confraternity of catechists to be united to those of *St. Peter's* in *Rome*, in which they granted forty days indulgence to all that assist every time catechism is given, even as hearers. Great care is to be taken that the catechists explain clearly the lessons, and that the children and others do not learn them, merely as parrots, but understand them, and be penetrated with them; also, that they conceive a great esteem of the catechism, and holy ardent desire and emulation in it, the proof of a true thirst of virtue. When the *Athenians* had forbid

forbid any citizen of *Megara* to set foot in *Athens*, under pain of death, one of that city, called *Euclides*, went in the night many miles disfigured, and lay hid in *Athens* in the day, returning the next night; and this he continued long to do, only that he might hear *Socrates's* lectures. *Aul. Gellius*, l. 6. c. 10. If a heathen was so earnest to learn a profane philosophy, what ought to be a Christian's zeal to hear the lessons of eternal life? If we desire to love God, the first step is, that we earnestly desire to know him and his holy will, which is done by faith, in which we are instructed in catechism. Children are to begin to learn its first articles as soon as they can speak, to be always encouraged in teaching it, by the assiduity and earnestness of parents and other teachers in instructing them, and the adult ought always to make it their study.

CHAP. IV.—ON THE CREED.

1. The creed is called in Latin, the symbol or distinctive mark of our faith: for, *symbolum* signifies a sign or mark, which a General gave his soldiers, by which they were known to belong to his troops. It was composed by the apostles, before they dispersed themselves to carry the gospel into all nations. We find it in the fourth age used in all the churches of the world, with very small variations, less than we find in different copies of the bible; which could never have been, had it not been made by the apostles in the beginning by common consent. *Tertullian* gives it almost word for word, and calls it a rule of faith descending from the tradition of the apostles, *de Præser.* c. 21. 13. 36. l. *contra præ.* c. 23. *St. Ireneus* quotes a considerable part of it, and calls it, *The faith received from the apostles*, l. 1. c. 10. *Lucifer of Cagliari* brings

brings it to shew what was the faith of the apostles. *l. de non conveniendo cum hæreticis, p. 161.* St. Ambrose says, *Let us believe the symbol of the apostles which the Roman Church always preserves unaltered. Ep. ad Siricium Papam. Item Serm. ult. de jejuniis Eliæ, t. 3. p. 326.* St. Jerome, *Pope Cælestin, ep. 5. ad Nestorium*, and all, ever since, have constantly attributed it to the apostles. But this suffices to demonstrate it of apostolic institution against the cavils of some modern pretended critics; against whom may be read *Nat. Alexander Eccles. Petit didier. Remarques sur la Bibl. de Du Pin, t. 1. p. 81. to 98. Ceiller, t. 1. p. 521.*

Rufin, in the fifth age, relates, in his exposition of the symbols; *Our ancestors assure us—that the apostles being about to disperse themselves to preach the gospel in different nations, being all assembled together, filled with the Holy Ghost, made this short summary or symbol of their future preaching, every one composing what he judged necessary to be inserted; and they decreed this rule to be given to the faithful.* It was not written, but only learned by tradition, during the three first centuries. Whence St. Jerome says of it; *In the symbol of our faith and hope, which being delivered by the apostles is not written in ink and paper, but on tables of the heart of flesh, the whole mystery of the christian doctrine, after the confession of the trinity and of the unity of the church, is concluded by the resurrection of the flesh.* It is not to be wondered that different translations introduced some little variation in words of small importance remarked by Rufin. The opinion which attributes an article to each apostle is a groundless conjecture, tho' hazarded in an anonymous modern sermon; *inter Serm. St. Aug. 115. de temp.*

2. It has always been regarded by the Church as its mark, and the rule of its faith, as in civil wars every soldier carrying some badge to shew to what side he belongs, says Rufin. It is the watch-word of

of our contract or engagement with God in baptism, as *St. Peter Chrysologus* elegantly explains, *Sermon 62, on the symbol*. The Christians were taught to recite it daily, and on all occasions. *St. Ambrose* says, *We must repeat the symbol, particularly before day-break every day, as the seal of our heart, which we must also recal to mind in any fear or danger*. For when is a soldier to be found without his badge or arms, either in the camp or in battle? *l. 3. de virginibus, t. 5. p. 550.*—*St. Austin, l. Serm. de Symbol. ad Catec. c. 1. t. 6. p. 542.* speaks thus to the catechumens: *Receive, my children, the rule of faith which is called the symbol; and when you have received it, write it in your hearts, and recite it every day by yourselves. Before you sleep, before you go out, arm yourselves with your symbol. No one writes the symbol, that your memory may be your book. And Serm. 213. t. 5. p. 938. The symbol is the short rule of faith, to instruct the mind, without being a burthen to the memory. It contains in a few words, whence much is to be learned. And Serm. 58. ol. 42. inter 50. t. 1. p. 343. Repeat your symbol daily, when you rise; repeat it when you lie down to sleep: render it to the Lord.—Do not say, I said it yesterday, I said it to-day, I say it every day. Let it be your last looking-glass; thy riches; the daily attire of your mind. When you rise, do not you dress yourself?—so by reciting your symbol, clothe your soul; and go not ~~out~~ naked.—We are cloathed with our faith. It is our helmet, and our only one. And Serm. 215. p. 1. t. 5. p. 947. You have received and repeated your symbol, which you must always retain in your mind and heart, recite in your beds, meditate in the streets, in which your mind may watch, whilst you sleep in body.*

Hence catechumens were obliged to recite the symbol by heart before baptism. See *St. Austin, Serm. 59. p. 343. Serm. 212. p. 936. Serm. 213. p. 939. t. 5. ed. Ben.* He relates, *ep. 227. ol. 67. t. 2. p. 830.* that a certain catechumen was refused baptism,

baptism, because he could not recite the symbol, and in punishment of his neglect, as he was admonished in a dream, seized with a palsy in all his limbs, and in his tongue. He learned the symbol by writing, and after this, recovered the use of his members, except of his tongue. The creed, Lord's prayer, and decalogue, were expounded in sermons to catechumens, and no one admitted to baptism who did not retain them. See *St. Austin, Sermon. 59. p. 343. &c.* The Council of *Mentz, an. 813. Can. 47. t. 7. Conc. p. 1251.* orders all such to be enjoined severe fasts and other chastisements who should not know perfectly the creed, the seal of faith, and the Lord's prayer. The second council of *Rhemes, an. 813.* commands, that all know the words, and understand the sense; for it is not lawful for any Christian to be ignorant of them. The capitulars of *Theodulph Bishop of Orleans, capit. 22. an. 797.* says of the creed and Lord's prayer, that if any one does not know them by heart, and often repeat them in his prayers, he cannot be a Catholic. The council of *Frejus, in the same age, says; Without them, no one can receive a portion in the kingdom of heaven.* *St. Charles* admonishes all, that the ignorant are to be asked them before they can be admitted to the sacraments. *Conc. Med. 5. Aët. Eccles. Med. 5. 1. p. 171.*

4. The *Nicene* creed was formed by the first general council of *Nice* against the *Arian* heresy. Some things were added against the *Semianans* and *Macedonians*, who denied the procession of the Holy Ghost. We read these additions in *St. Epiphanius in Anchor.* and they were approved soon after in the second general council held at *Cple*: from whence this is called the *Cpltan* creed.

The *Athanasian* creed was framed against all the other heresies which soon after *Arianism* attacked the holy mysteries of the incarnation and the trinity. It can only be called *Athanasian*, because that

that Father was the great champion of the chief points it most explicitly professes, chiefly against the *Arians* and *Apollinarists*. It seems to have been composed by some *Gallican* prelate in the fifth century, before *Eutyches*, or even *Nestorius*, had broached their heresies. It was afterwards adopted by the churches of *Spain*, as appears from the fourth council of *Toledo*, whilst that country had great reason to guard itself against *Arianism* brought into it by the *Goths*: *Fortunatus* of *Poitiers* wrote a commentary upon it, and has been used for many ages, by all the Western churches, and many of the Eastern.

The creed being the abridgment of what we are to believe by faith, and as it were, the corner stones of this structure, every christian is bound to be perfectly instructed in the rehearsing of each article, that he may recite it with understanding, and also accompany each word with his heart, dilating his affections in sentiments of profound adoration, praise, love, confidence and other virtues, whilst he professes his firm assent to each mystery.

D I S C O U R S E XIX.

ON MATRIMONY.

1. **M**ATRIMONY is a special contract of an individual society of life, betwixt a man and a woman, betwixt whom there is no impediment, and who give and accept mutually the dominion of each other's bodies. It is in itself exceeding honourable and holy, instituted by God himself, appointed by him in the state of innocence and perfection in paradise; and since man's fall, made a remedy of concupiscence, as well as the source from whence the world is propagated and preserved.

served. It is founded in nature, and was of precept in the first creation of man, as *St. Cyprian*, and *St. Austin*, *l. de bono Viduit.* observe, as it was God's will that the world should be peopled and maintained; but not afterwards, as to individuals, as appears in *Josue, Elias, Jeremie, Daniel, &c.* And in the new law, a state of virginity is more excellent and more perfect *Mat. xix. 12.* *There are eunuchs, who have made themselves so for the kingdom of heaven,* and *1 Cor. vii. &c.* Tho' it is sometimes of precept to particular persons, out of justice to the public, as if the public peace and support of the commonwealth depends upon an heir. Those words, *Increase and multiply, Gen. i.* are no precept, but a benediction; for the same are addressed to brides incapable of a precept. Matrimony was, in its primitive institution, an office of nature; but even in the state of innocence, a great mystery and figure, representing the future spiritual union of Christ with his Church.

2. Our blessed Redeemer honoured this contract many ways; exalted it to the dignity of a sacrament of the new law, and made its union more strict and sacred. He had from the beginning conferred upon it a singular privilege, as it is a great mystery, ordained to represent his indissoluble union with his church, which it does more perfectly in the new law, in which the band is more sacred and more indissoluble. He honoured it with his presence, and by the first miracle which he wrought, at a marriage in *Cana*. But all its privileges are eclipsed by the dignity of a great sacrament to which he raised it. *Eph. v. 32.*

We then respect this holy state, so highly honoured by Christ, and we regard it as the seminary of the church, the nursery of heaven, the mother of the world, a school for the exercise of many great virtues, and the strictest union, and nearest relation that can be established between persons:
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for by it, who are made one in the same flesh, consequently the greatest comfort, most perfect enjoyment on earth, of all the advantages of friendship and reciprocal offices of tender love. But then the obligations and difficulties of this state are likewise very great, and if the marriage be unhappy, nothing can be more so: instead of a comfort, it then becomes the greatest plague in life; and instead of being a band of union, it is a perpetual slavery: instead of being an exercise of virtue and a state of sanctity, it is an endless source of disorder and sin. Hence, persons become bad citizens and bad servants. Confusion and vice reign in private families, and the whole world is over-run with a violation of every duty, and with all manner of disorders.

3. Almighty God in his most tender providence has furnished Christians with the most powerful helps and the most sovereign means to sanctify their marriages, and fortify themselves against these difficulties. But the general neglect or abuse of them is the great evil to which we are obliged to ascribe the misfortune of the daily miscarriages which happen. Unhappy marriages not only make the parties temporally miserable, but also involve them in spiritual ruin, fill families with all manner of evils and disturbances, are attended with a bad education of children, and are truly the bane of a commonwealth. To prevent so fatal mischiefs, no one must engage in this state without mature deliberation and a virtuous intention.

That marriage is not to be embraced rashly or on some sudden motion, we have but to consider the example of all such, whose remaining life is a fruitless repentance, as soon as their visionary dreams are over. *Secondly*, That it is a choice of the highest importance, both for their temporal and eternal welfare, and on which mainly depends the happiness or misery of the rest of their life.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, That it is an unchangeable state for life, and in which no noviceship is allowed as before entering a religious order, though frequently its difficulties and burdens are much greater and much less known. *Fourthly*, That it is always a state of many cares and troubles, and a perpetual train of concerns, crosses, and pains, in the management of temporal affairs, education of children, and government of a family. *Fifthly*, That by it a man stakes himself down a captive for life, binding himself, and resigning the dominion and disposal of himself over to another, and perhaps to one of a very unsuitable temper, foolish, melancholy, jealous, furious, fordid, haughty, untractable, or perverse. To be thus tied down to an extravagant humour, is not ill compared by some to that barbarous invention of tyrants, who coupled the living to some dead carcase, that they might live a lingering death. It is therefore a necessary caution to be given all young persons that they be upon their guard against all flattering speeches or seduction, not to listen to them, for fear of being inveigled by them to their ruin, and never to be drawn into a snare, so far as to part with their liberty by any rash promise, the occasions and dangers of which must be scrupulously shunned.

4. A pious intention is the first thing required to draw down the divine blessing on a marriage; but a condition often wanting. One is tempted to marry, only to be independent, to be rid of the check of a watchful parent or aunt; but soon finds it far worse, to be tied to one person with many imperfections and faults which are to be borne with and suffered. Another marries upon a sudden passion of fondness or carnal love, which he imagines will be perpetual; but sudden passions, though never so violent, are as suddenly changed as in *Ammon*; especially if founded on corporal beauty, or other fading qualities, at least, necessity and hardships

hardships amongst the poor, or pride, crosses, or peevishness amongst the rich, soon extinguish that passion; and then all is misery, and the very person becomes hateful. Most engage, promising themselves mountains of gold or pleasures, and finding instead hereof, anxiety, miseries and antipathy, are the more tormented at the disappointment. Some are induced to marry only out of a motive of covetousness: but such usually meet with their own punishment in their own state itself, which they abuse, and convert into a market of money.

The only motives or intentions which virtue allows, are, to seek that individual society of the other sex, for the mutual succour which the instinct of nature directs to procure in the affairs of life.

Secondly, To bring up children in the service of God, who may perpetuate his honour on earth, and people heaven; the noble ends for which God has instituted the propagation of mankind. *Thirdly*, It is a lawful, though imperfect motive, to seek, by lawful marriage, a remedy against temptations of the flesh; 1 *Cor.* vii. though this ought at most only to be a secondary motive, either in embracing or in the use of marriage. See *St. Austin, l. de bono conj. c. 7. 10. 13. &c. St. Gregory the Great, de cur. past. 3 P. c. 28. St. Thomas in 4 dist. 31. a. 2. ad 2. St. Bonaventure, &c.*

5. The light and direction of the Holy Ghost, to be implored by earnest and persevering prayer, alms, and the practice of other good works, both in the deliberation of this state, and in choice of a wife. A party is to be sought, in the first place, eminent for her purity of faith, and all virtues and spiritual endowments. *St. Chrysostom* elegantly shews this by the example of *Abraham*, so solicitous to procure a wife to his son *Isaac* from amongst the true servants of God. *Hom. 46. in Gen.*

A deliberation proportioned to the difficulty and importance of this choice is absolutely necessary.

The blessed Trinity created man, as it were, by common counsel. *Let us make man to our own image.* What man will purchase an estate without knowing it, and after mature consideration? *Bestow thy daughter, and thou shalt have done a great work; and give her to a prudent man.* Eccl. vii. 27. *A holy and a modest woman is a grace upon grace.* Eccl. xxvi. 19. A wife of virtue, prudence and conduct will be the greatest comfort, support and treasure. *He who has found a good wife has found a good thing, and will reap joy from the Lord.* Prov. xvii. 22. *Her prudence and piety will be infinitely the best fortune.* *A wise woman buildeth her house; but the unwise one will destroy with her hands that which is built.* Prov. xiv. 1. The chief marks of such a one are meekness, humility, devotion, application and love of work, and of abiding at home.

But where shall such a one be found! *Sir John More* inculcating this maxim to his son *Sir Thomas* the celebrated chancellor, compares a man going to marry, to one who should put his hand into a sack, in which were 99 serpents, and only one eel: it is 99 to one that he lays hold of a venomous creature, and is bit sorely. God is to be earnestly consulted by prayer. He will conduct those who thus open their hearts to him, as he did the young *Tobie* to *Sara*. Prov. xix. 14. *A house and riches are given by parents; but a prudent wife, properly by the Lord.* The advice of spiritual directors is not to be omitted. As parents would sin grievously who should not leave marriage to their childrens free choice and deliberation, as it is their personal engagement; so children sin mortally against the respect and obedience which they owe to parents, if they marry against their consent, or without their advice, unless the parents opposition be notoriously unjust.

Unsuitable matches between persons of very different ranks, usually produce dissensions among relations, and many other evils, which render them
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in general unlawful before God. *St. Chrysostom*, in his homily on this subject, *Hom. Quales uxores sint ducendæ*, t. 3. 13. 217. *Let us seek only one thing, virtue and good manners, that we may enjoy perpetual peace and benevolence. For he who marries a rich wife, chooses rather a mistress than a wife.—And riches are sooner scattered than any cloud. But a modest woman knows how to make a good use even of poverty.*

6. Matrimony is a great sacrament, as it is called by the apostle, on account of its founder Christ, and of the great mystery which it represents, viz. the eternal espousal of Christ with his church: and on account of the great ends for which it was instituted, the great and important graces which it bestows, and the great obligations it lays upon those who receive it, to fulfil which, it gives the most powerful spiritual succours. The dangers and obligations of this state are of such a nature, that it was a singular mercy of Christ to man, that he was pleased to establish this holy sacrament to qualify and strengthen him to comply more easily and perfectly with them, and live up to the sanctity of his calling. Yet we see marriage defiled and filled with all manner of disorders, even amongst Christians. Nor can we be surprised at this general desolation, if we consider, that though no sacrament be more necessary, yet no sacrament is more criminally profaned. Men receive it full of the world and their passions, and with very lame preparations. What wonder then they find their abuse of it a source of maledictions! The devil knows that if he defiles christian marriages, he shall hence easily infect the whole commonwealth with a deluge of sin. His stratagem succeeds. From the abuse of this holy sacrament and state, flow the numberless evils under which we groan, and we may justly complain with the heathen poet*.

* *Fœcunda culpæ sæcula nuptias
Primum inquinavere et genus et domos;
Hoc fonte derivata clades
In patriam populumque fluxit,*

Those who desire to escape these wrecks both of soul and body in this state, must be careful to bring the best preparation possible to this holy sacrament, and to the nuptial bed, by all the conditions above said, by a long course of prayer, a most perfect repentance and purity of heart, and by the most holy intention and motives.

7. In the holy ceremonies with which this sacrament is conferred, the ring, blessed and put on the woman's finger, signifies fidelity in heart and mouth, and that their mutual love and engagement is not to be ended but by death. The piece of money shews, the husband promises her his care and provision, and her acknowledgment of his authority in the administration, in which she can claim no other strict right than what is allowed for the direction of the interior domestic affairs, though the husband ought to share with her all his concerns, as prudence and confidence shall suggest. The joining of hands signifies mutual help betwixt the two parties both in prosperity and adversity. The blessing of the priest is to beg of God plentiful grace, fruitfulness, concord, peace and prosperity both temporal and spiritual. Paranymps are sometimes employed in this sacrament, to offer the bride to the bridegroom, to represent how God brought *Eve* to *Adam*, and to shew that the intention of marriage is the glory of God and the procreation and education of children. The essence of the contract consists in the mutual free engagement exteriorly expressed by each party, by which they deliver to each other the dominion of their persons. The day of marriage ought all to be employed in devotion, with the young *Tobie*. All passion is to be excluded from the intention in approaching each other, lest they fall under the power of the devil *Asmodæus*, who slew the seven lustful husbands of *Sara*. The solemn benediction in matrimony is given to the spouses before the people,

ple, because the mass is chiefly applied to them. The priest also prays for their special graces after the *Pater noster*, in which he had prayed for their general necessities in the petitions.

A happy marriage is a holy and inviolable league, an honourable alliance, a sweet society maintained with constancy, mutual trust, and a continual chain of good offices and duties reciprocally paid, a conversation of chaste affections and entire friendship, with a total exclusion of all things, will, inclinations, persons, interests and goods. The principal obligations of the parties are love, fidelity, the education of children and care of their temporal affairs. The superiority of the husband is clear both from the old and new scriptures. It is founded in nature itself, and in the strength, sufficiency, and majesty of his sex, and the softness and weakness of the other. He therefore owes to the wife, as the weaker vessel, singular tenderness, compassion, complaisance, care, support and protection. The wife owes to him submission and reasonable obedience. It is her virtue to make his humour her study, and to soften his passions by her unwearyed sweetness, tenderness and compassion for his weaknesses. As she loves and honours him, she is to shew this, and to set him off in words and behaviour, without fulsome affectation, as her glory. She must give him the deference in all affairs, and attribute to him the honour of every thing. It is the amiable qualification of her sex, to be humble, modest, reserved in words, loving and peaceable. It is by this conduct she will gain her husband and others to God, and be the blessing of her family.

8. Mutual constant love and affection is the first duty of the married state. It is the strictest alliance, the closest and the most indissoluble union on earth, which is to be both in hearts, in concerns, and in bodies, so that they be two in the same flesh.

Christ

Christ could not give us a greater idea of this than by declaring it a great mystery, the image of his union with his Church, on which he imprints his spirit to the end of the world. To break an alliance so sacred, must be a crying sacrilege. *Adam* expresses the tie of this conjunction of man and wife in these strong words confirmed by Christ. *A man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh.* Mark x. 7, 8. Gen. ii. 24. Upon which *St. Chrysostom* says, *Hom. 45. in Gen. t. 4. p. 458. As the body is never divided from itself, nor the soul against itself; so neither must man and wife be ever divided; but always united.* And upon those words of *St. Paul*, Tit. ii. 2. *To love their husbands*, he writes thus. *This is the principal foundation of domestic peace and of all goods, if the wife in all things agree with her husband. Where this is, nothing can happen sorrowful. If the head be united with the body, all things must be in peace. If princes agree, who can divide the people? But if these disagree, nothing can go well, and the whole family must totter. Nothing is greater or more necessary than this. It goes far beyond riches, nobility, power, honours: it is most useful to all things.*

9. Mutual fidelity and continency are the second great conjugal duty which they inviolably promise to each other and to God, who seals and confirms their engagement by the sacred band of the sacrament, which draws its force of binding and cementing them into one from the adorable blood of Christ. Hence adultery is a profanation of this sacrament, a violation of the most solemn and inviolable contract, a grievous injustice to the injured party, in what is more precious than his estate.

A marriage, without mutual love and union, is a kind of hell: for a perpetual cohabitation with one whose person and conversation is disagreeable, is

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an object of averſion, joined with the thought that only death can be a deliverance, makes a ſituation more uneaſy than can be expreſſed. To prevent this diſorder, is often more difficult than is eaſily imagined. All a perſon's imperfections, capricious tempers, and bad humours; all his folly, impertinence, vanity, &c. diſcover themſelves in wedlock. His carriage towards externs is obliging and agreeable: but in a domeſtic life, the mask is taken off, and a perſon appears ſuch as he really is. Hence it is incredible how much a perſon has to ſuffer from a huſband who is capricious, haughty, choleric, untractable: or what a ſenſible man has to ſuffer with an unreaſonable wife. How hard not to imbibe each other's pride, ambition, avarice, anger, or not be engaged to connive at and favour them; or flatter, by condeſcenſion, the other's vices, &c.

In the degrees of chaſtity, the firſt rank is that of virginity, the ſecond is that of continency, as in holy widowhood; the third is that of conjugal chaſtity, which has its ſpecial merit. The fathers unanimoſly diſtinguiſh theſe ſtates in this order. See *St. Auſtin*, *St. Chryſoſtom*, the ancient author of the book on *Purity* amongſt the works of *St. Cyprian*, &c. Indeed conjugal chaſtity has its conflicts; which, in ſome circumſtances, may be much more ſevere and troubleſome than in a ſtate of virginity, as in ſickneſs and ſeveral other caſes. *Sir Thomas More* declared that he found it ſo by experience. Marriage is, indeed, a remedy againſt temptations of the fleſh, as *St. Paul*, *St. Auſtin*, &c. call it; but then it is a violent one. Any exceſs or intemperance in the lawful uſe of marriage, is a venial ſin, as *St. Auſtin* has wrote whole volumes to prove. And any ſin againſt purity, whether in thought, word, or action, is aggravated by the ſanctity of that ſtate. It is to be adviſed, that they obſerve ſtrict continency on feſtivals, faſts, and the days before and after communion, as *St. Charles* admoniſhes:

nishes; which was strictly commanded by several ancient canons, now in disuse. *Villefore* has made an ample collection of them. *St. Paul* advises to continency for a time to apply themselves to prayer. It is pointed out by nature during the corporal infirmities of the sex, *Lev. xx. 1.* though the marriage duty cannot in justice be absolutely refused, if lawfully asked.

10. Patience is an indispensable virtue of this state, which being engaged in a variety of worldly affairs, always inconstant and uncertain, is exposed to frequent crosses and trials from disappointments and miscarriages in concerns; whence tribulation is the portion of the married. *Such shall have tribulation of the flesh. 1 Cor. vii. 28.* The parties will likewise have a great deal to suffer from one another. No man is without all imperfections both of mind and body; and both husband and wife will have often enough to forgive each other, and always something to bear. Life is long, especially for persons who are always together night and day; nor can any one enjoy a perpetual flow of health, cheerfulness and spirits: Those who have more to bear, having a wife or husband of a more untoward or brutish temper, must provide themselves with more than an ordinary stock of patience, and look upon this circumstance as ordained by God, for the exercise of their virtue, as *Socrates* on that account thought his gain to virtue, that he had the most intolerable shrew for a wife. The christian is to consider, that it is by this trial he is to be saved. *St. Chrysostom* speaks thus on the subject; *Thy wife is perpetually at war with thee; when thou comest into thy house, she meets thee like some wild beast, and whets her tongue like a sharp sword against thee. It is indeed a severe circumstance that thy assistant is become thy adversary. But examine yourself, if in your youth you have not, by some levity or crime, provoked the divine justice, by which you have deserved this chastisement;*

ment; and your wife is employed by God to heal your wound. She does the office of a spiritual surgeon, and though she does not know the wounds which she cuts, the physician, who is God, knows them; in *Ps. 3. p. 3. F. C. ed. B. &c.* Patience and sweetness will have some effect on the most savage heart, and will, in the end, often convert it to God; at least it will mitigate and soften it, and gain the greatest crown in glory. Read the life of *St. Monica*. The good effect of a respectful, officious and condescending love, joined with a virtuous example, is incredible. *St. Jerome* said of *Læta*, such a wife, in his high figurative stile: *I believe that Jupiter himself, if he had such a wife, could have believed in Christ. If the husband be savage or harsh, says St. Basil, a wife must bear him. Does he strike or beat—but he is your husband; he is linked to you by nature, and is your member.*
l. 7. *Hex.*

11. The principal obligation and end of marriage, is the good education of children. *St. Charles* orders that parents be admonished, whilst the mother is with child, daily to recommend and offer her fruit earnestly to God, begging his blessing and grace, that it may ever faithfully serve his divine Majesty, and still more after its birth and baptism; receiving it from the sacred font as a most precious treasure intrusted to them by God, to be preserved in innocence and sanctity, and prepared to be a citizen of heaven. *St. Charles* and *Rituals* admonish that children, from the first use of reason, if possible, be laid in separate beds, especially none of different sexes together. But of this, care of servants, œconomy, &c. &c. elsewhere.

It suffices to add here, that the greatest comforts of a married state are to be expected from good children, as the most severe trials are also from them, if disobedient and untractable. Even the afflictions from their sickness, death, and the like accidents deterred *Thales* from marrying, not to ex-

pose his virtue to so dangerous a trial, which *Solon* himself was not able to bear, as we read in a memorable example in his life, in *Plutarch*.

Set children no example of irregular passions, teach them from their cradle to curb their own, guard them from all impressions which tend to kindle their passions, or the love of the world, and to extinguish in them the grace of God. Watch against bad company; instruct them early in the maxims and spirit of piety, &c.

Lastly, How difficult is it to live in the hurry of the world, and not be carried away by the torrent of its dispositions, spirit and maxims! to live so in it as not to be of it, but in the midst of its whirlpool, to maintain himself steady in the maxims and spirit of our holy faith.

D I S C O U R S E , XX.

O N H O P E .

1. **F**AITH is the ground of hope; for, by knowing the promises of God, and the means of attaining them, we conceive a vehement desire and strong hope of them. There is a natural hope, which, in good things, is a moral virtue, but in those that are evil, a passion. This is defined by philosophers, an efficacious desire of some absent, difficult possible good, with a confidence of obtaining it. This is the great support and comfort of human life, and the principle and soul of success in all undertakings. It alone carries man through all difficulties and labours, and gives enjoyment in the prosecution of good. Without its balm, life would be insupportable to men, as the joy of possession and contentment is not the portion of this world,

world. *Theological* hope produces the same effects in a supernatural life, but so much the more noble as it is more elevated, and its motives stronger and more powerful. It is defined, *a virtue infused by God, by which we expect from him, with a firm confidence, the goods of eternal life.* It is a theological virtue, as God is its immediate object; for its motive is his almighty power and infinite goodness. It is infused by God as faith is, and his special gift in our souls, which it raises to a supernatural state or power of acting, and is itself a supernatural habit. *The God of hope will fill you with all peace and joy. Rom. xv. 13.* And the eternal wisdom says, *Eccl. xxiv. 24. I am the mother of holy hope.—In me is all hope of life and of virtue.*

2. Hope implies not only a noble desire, but also an elevation, and effort of the soul, to enjoy the possession of God for all ages. Its principal object is God: but all the means of salvation, whether temporal or spiritual, likewise belong to its object, especially all the benefits of grace, which are future. *Hope is of pardon, of grace, and of glory,* says *St. Bernard, Sermon. 45. de div. p. 1181.* The difficulty of attaining the object is a condition in hope, as obscurity is in faith. Hence hope remains in purgatory; but not in the blessed in heaven: where, the apostle says, *faith and hope cease, and only charity remains. 1 Cor. xiii.* For *what a man sees, how does he hope? Rom. viii.* Hence the saints in glory, till the day of judgment, rather expect than properly hope our felicity, and the glory of their own bodies.

The motive of our hope is jointly the power and goodness of God; that he is able and ready to save us. As this cannot fail, hope is absolutely certain in itself; yet it is accompanied with a fear of our malice and frailty; though he who hopes has a firm purpose to attain this felicity by fervour and watchfulness, through the succours of divine grace.

Hope

Hope remains in sinners, though all sin abates something of its confidence and its free access to God. Despair and presumption destroy it, by removing its motive. Heresy likewise ruins hope by taking away faith, which is its foundation, and bars the substance of the things which we hope.

3. Hope is absolutely necessary to receive pardon of our sin, to live in grace or obtain eternal glory. It is necessary to a christian life. It is only by desire and hope that we are on earth citizens of the heavenly *Jerusalem*, walk towards our blessed country, and belong to the society of the saints. Without it, men are inhabitants of this *Babylon*, make it their country, live not here as banished men and strangers, and pretend no title or right to other goods. *He who does not sigh a stranger, shall not rejoice a citizen, because the desire is not in him, says St. Austin in Ps. 148. 11. 4. p. 1675.* Hope makes a soul love and desire heaven her dear country, and extend her heart beyond the goods of this world into the riches of eternity, soaring above the heavens to God himself, whom it confidently desires to possess. Hence, *thirdly*, it inspires a contempt of this mortal life and its false goods, as empty shadows and dangerous illusions, disengaging us from all fading pleasures and earthly affections, as not having a permanent city, but seeking that which is to come. *Heb. xiii. 14.* *Fourthly*, It excites us to love God, who has prepared such blessings for us, and has put into our hands the means to acquire it. For as hope arises from faith, so charity springs from hope. Thus charity again produces afresh, and strengthens hope, by a holy circle, as *St. Ambrose observes in cap. 17 Lucae.* For we hope most earnestly to obtain what we love. *Fifthly*, Hope makes us fear, lest by negligence and sloth, we lose what we hope amidst the dangers and rocks of this life, and animates us to labour with watchfulness and earnestness for salvation. *Every*

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one that hath this hope in him, sanctifieth himself. 1 John iii. 3. *Sixthly*, It gives courage and strength. *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. Ps. xxii. 4. Seventhly*, It comforts and supports us under afflictions, and inspires us to make a good use of them. By it the saints rejoiced in ignominies, torments and death, because they sought a better country. *Heb. xi. 14.*

4. Hope is the soul of prayer; for we only ask of God the things which we hope. Hence in our Lord's prayer we are taught to ask of God all those goods both temporal and eternal which we hope from his bounty, as *St. Austin* observes, who says; *In the three first petitions eternal goods are begged; in the other four temporal blessings, which yet are necessary for the eternal. Enchir. c. 15.* The fervour of our prayer will be greater in proportion to the vehemence and ardour of our hope. By hope, we pay to God a most acceptable homage of our souls. For by this virtue we profess, and not in words only, but also in our deepest affections and actions, that he is all powerful and infinitely good and merciful. This honours him in those attributes, in which he chiefly delights; by this we acknowledge him our father, and shew ourselves to be his children, placing all our dependance in him, owning we are nothing and have nothing of ourselves, but rest entirely in his fatherly goodness and infinite power and mercy. He who delights in mercies above all his other works, must be pleased with a homage, by which he is honoured as the Father of mercies. *Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him. Ps. xc.*

This confidence in him is a principal disposition of heart, which moves him to receive our penance, and to hear our prayers, as he declares in his holy scriptures. *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have*

have hoped in thee, Ps. xxxii. 22. I have hoped in thee, O Lord, let me not be confounded for ever. Ps. xx.

5. Men lie under a strict precept of making an act of hope, *first*, when they are converted from sin, as the council of Trent declares, *Seff. 6. c. 6. He that hopeth in the Lord shall be healed. Prov. xxviii. 25.* And our Saviour in the gospel often imputes the pardon of sin to confidence in him. The sinner, struck with fear, must raise his confidence in the mercies of God, that he will forgive him, if he sues for pardon with a contrite heart. *Secondly*, A precept of this virtue, obliges in the first moral instant of the use of reason, or when first the promises of a future life are suggested to a person. *Thirdly*, When a person has lost hope by a sin of despair or presumption. *Fourthly*, When it is necessary to overcome any temptation, especially of despair. *Fifthly*, In any moral danger of death. *Lastly*, So frequently, that the acts of this virtue be not intermitted for any considerable time. *We live by hope, says St. Bernard. Serm. 7. in Ps. 90. p. 838.* We may continually repeat in our hearts, as well as with our mouths; *Thy kingdom come.* As *St. Austin* says, *Tr. 4. in ep. Joan, t. 3. p. 2. p. 853. Because you cannot yet see, let your whole duty be in desires. The whole life of a good christian is a continued holy desire. By desiring you are made capable to be filled when it shall come*.*

6. The signs of perfect hope in the soul are;
 1. If it works in her an entire obedience of the divine laws. 2. If she contemns the world and its false goods; for one that thinks only of the earth, and is wholly buried in it, can never truly be filled with this divine virtue. 3. If she, with continual sighs, desires the kingdom of heaven and the gifts of divine grace, and is solicitous and earnest in the practice of all the means to obtain them. 4. If

* *Desiderando capax efficeris ut cum venerit implearis.*

she resists manfully all temptations and dangers, and bears courageously all afflictions and sufferings in the spirit of virtue. *God makes all omnipotent who hope in him. All things are possible to him that believes, or has confidence. Is not he omnipotent to whom all things are possible? Thus the soul, if she does not presume in herself, but rely on Christ, will be able so to command in herself, that no injustice can ever tyrannize over her. As she places her strength in Christ, no violence, no storm, no deceit, no allurements can either throw her down or subdue her, clad with strength from above, says St. Bernard, Serm. 85. in Cant. n. 5. p. 1563. Lastly, True hope expels the fear of the world. How weak must be the faith of a christian whilst he forgets that God is his protector? Thou hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth: and thou hast been afraid continually all the day at the presence of his fury who had afflicted thee, and had prepared himself to destroy thee; where is now the fury of thy oppressor? Isa. i. 13. If God be for us, who is against us? If wild beasts rage, fear God. Every creature is under him whom you are commanded to fear. St. Aug. Ps. 32. The Emperor is surrounded by his guards, and he is without fear. A mortal man protected by mortal men is secure. And shall the man who is protected by the immortal, fear and tremble? St. Aug. in Ps. 26.*

7. The first means to obtain christian hope is to beg it ardently of God, reflecting often, with the afflicted father in the gospel: *I believe; Lord, increase my faith. Matt. ix. 23.* He had faith in Christ, but he asked a faith which might raise him to perfect confidence.

The second means is to meditate often, and deeply to penetrate our hearts with the powerful motives which we have to hope in God, his almighty power, his mercy, and his fidelity to his promises, and the pledges he has given us of his tenderness, goodness and holy providence. *There*

are three things, says St. Bernard, which so strengthen and confirm my hope, that no want of merits, no consideration of my own baseness, no immensity of the heavenly glory, can cast me from the height of hope, in which my heart is firmly rooted in God.—I consider three things, in which all my hope is placed; the love with which God has adopted me, the truth of his promise, and his power to fulfil it. Let my foolish thoughts mutter never so much, saying, Who are you? How great is that glory? By what merits do you hope to obtain it? And I will answer confidently,; I know in whom I have believed and trusted, and I am assured that he has adopted me in excess of charity, that he is true in his promises, and all-powerful in their execution. Serm. 3. tom. 6. post Pent. n. 6.

If we consider his power, what can daunt us? What are all the powers of hell, and all the fury of creatures against him? If he is for us, it is as impossible that any thing can hurt us, as it is impossible for creatures to resist the arm of the Most High. The three children feared not the threats of the mighty king of *Babylon*, having God for their protector; him, whose will all nature obeys, by whose immediate help all creatures are moved, and whom nothing can withstand. Without him, all things cease to be. He will overturn all the laws of nature, and even annihilate the universe, sooner than be able to suffer one word of his divine promises to fail.

8. But are we assured that God will employ his power in our defence? Yes, most certainly. We believe no less in his mercy than in his omnipotence. He is most desirous to assist and save us. Being the sovereign good, he desires to communicate himself to his creatures with so great an ardour, that no understanding can conceive it. He pities and succours them in their miseries with a love which he alone can comprehend. His goodness

ness is tender above that of any father towards us*. He is our most loving Father by creation, redemption and adoption. *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. I have graven thee in my hands.* Isa. xlii. 15, 16. Hence he delights to be called our Father. Your Father knows that you want all these things. Mat. vi. Thou art our Father, and Abraham hath not known us, and Israel hath been ignorant of us: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer: from everlasting is thy name. Isa. lxi. 16. I am made a Father to Israel. Jer. xxi. And Christ says; To your Father, and to my Father. John xx.

He is tender of us, because we are the noble workmanship of his divine hands. Thou hatest nothing of those things which thou hast made; and thou sparest all things, because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls. Sap. xi. Behold all souls are mine. Ezech. xviii. On this title the prophets prayed. Visit that vineyard which thy right hand hath planted. Ps. lxxvii. And now, O Lord, thou art our Father; and we are clay, and thou art our Maker, and all we are the work of thy hands. Isa. lxiv. 8. Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me wholly round about, and dost thou thus cast me down headlong on a sudden! Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me. Job x. 8, 9. As as a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame. Ps. ii. 13, 14.

He is not only our Creator, but our Redeemer. So much has he loved us, as to have given his only Son for us. John iii. 1. John iv. He has by this given us a proof of the excess of his infinite love and goodness; he has also, by a new pledge, bound himself to love us still more. For the purchase of a thing is a new title of love and protection, espe-

* Tam pater nemo, tam pius nemo. Tertullian.

cially if the price was great, and it was drawn from greater evils.

9. He shews in particular his mercy to sinners, and his desire of their repentance. Whence he is called the Father of mercies. *2 Cor. 1.* He declares that it is not his will that the sinner should die, but be converted and live. *Ezec. xviii.* For this he defers the punishment of sinners, that they may be converted. *Rom. ii. 5.* dissembling the sins of men for the sake of repentance; *Sap. xi. 24.* chastising them that err, by little and little, admonishing them, and speaking to them, that they would leave their wickedness; *Sap. xii. 2.* which his divine justice might instantly plunge into hell. He calls upon them by the interior voice of their own consciences, by awaking examples, and by the most loving exhortations, threats and invitations, of which all the prophets are full, by whose mouths he every where testifies how his tender bowels yearn over every soul fallen into sin. How does he exhort and try all means with sinners, before he punishes them, as he did with *Jerusalem* before he abandoned it? After many threats against that unfaithful city, he most tenderly expressed his love, and invited it to return, saying; *I am not angry*; disputing with himself as in doubt whether yet to deliver her over to her enemies, and crying out; *Will she not make peace with me? Will she not atone, and make peace? Isa. xxvii. 4.* Hear ye deaf, and ye blind, behold that you may see. Who is blind but my servant; or deaf, but he to whom I have sent my messengers? *Isa. xlii. 18, 19.* Read *Jer. vii. Jonas iv. &c.* If at last he is obliged to punish, it is with regret, and he calls it a strange or foreign work to him. *That he may do his work, his strange work; his work is strange to him. Isa. xxviii. 21.* Hence goodness and mercy are called his chief attribute; nay his very essence; and in their effects

he surpassed all his other works, as we see in the mysteries of our redemption.

How universally does he promise pardon to all that repent? *Ezec.* xi. xxxii. xxxiv. xxxvii. *Fer.* iii. &c. Never did sinner return by a sincere conversion, who did not find pardon. See *Adam and Eve, Manasses, 2 Par.* xxxiii. the *Ninivites, Jonas* i. ii. iii. iv. the *Magdalene, St. Paul, &c.* Meditate on the parable of the prodigal son, and the others, by which our Saviour declares the joy of the whole court of heaven upon one sincere conversion, and the *Reflections of Bishop Languet*, at length, in his book *Sur les Misericordes de Dieu*. For this he has promised heaven, for this he has threatened hell. *God, inviting to penance, says, Am not I he, &c.* See from *St. Chrysostom, T. 1. on penance, p. 1010.*

10. The inviolable fidelity of God to his promises, is another strong motive to inspire us with confidence in him; a rock, which no waves, no storms can shake. His fatherly goodness ought alone to have sufficed to calm all our doubts and fears. But to remove all our distrust and anxieties, he has been pleased to condescend to bind himself down by the most sacred engagement of his promises, which can no more fail than he can cease to be God. Can we entertain the doubt or diffidence, after all the promises which he has made to assure us of his good will towards us, and of the goods which he has prepared for us. They are numberless, and all for us? From them we are called the sons of promise. *Gal.* iv. 28. At a time when he owes us nothing but punishment, he promises us infinite blessings, and his constant protection, if we chuse it. Though his word be infallible, he has been pleased to confirm it with his oath. *God meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise, the immutability of his counsel, interposed an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible*

impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort. Heb. vi. 17, 18. O happy man, for whom God himself swears, and pawns his own unchangeable truth! but criminal and unhappy, if he still remains suspicious and distrustful.

11. To his oath he has added his written contract or covenant*. And for the pledge of his fidelity, and our greater security, he died to confirm his testament and alliance with us. He gives himself our surety, and signs and ratifies our predestination with the same blood with which he effaces the schedule of our condemnation. When we see Christ come from heaven and crucified for us, giving himself also to be our food in the holy sacrament of the altar, with what confidence *do we expect the accomplishment of his promises? He that spared not even his own Son; but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not, with him, given us all things? Rom. viii. 32.*

The infinite treasure of the merits and of the adorable blood of Christ, is made our ransom, is given us, and put into our hands. If the immense joys of heaven are too high for us to aspire to, are they above the infinite merits of Christ? If our sins are grievous, and above the atonement of all creatures, is not the blood of Christ sufficient to wipe them away? If our weakness and abyss of indigence affrights, let us remember the riches of Christ are ours. We offer them to his eternal Father, in atonement for our sins, to cover our own miseries, to supply the imperfections and defects of our corrupt nature, and to draw all strength and grace from. All hope is rashness and presumption, unless it be grounded on the merits of Christ, on which alone is founded our title to all grace and glory. *St. Bernard, in a dangerous sickness, was*

* “Parum erat promissis; etiam scripto, &c. teneri voluit.”
St. Aug. in B. 109,

tempted to despair; but answered the devil in these words: "It is true I cannot presume that I
 "deserve heaven; but Christ, my Lord, has a double title to it, by inheritance from his Father,
 "and by the price of his blood. This second he
 "has transferred on me. Challenging it by his
 "right, I am not confounded. By it the enemy
 "was vanquished." So *William of St. Thierry*, in his life, B. 1. c. 12.

12. To exercise acts of hope, we must, indeed, be solicitous to use all proper means and diligence in all affairs, not to tempt God; but in them we must raise our hearts to God, placing all our confidence in him; relying on his mercy and power; saying always with the Psalmist. *Thou, O Lord, art my hope. Ps. xc.* Upon which words *St. Bernard* writes thus; *Serm. 9. in Ps. 90. Qui habitat. Whatever is to be done, whatever is to be shunned, whatever is to be suffered, Thou, O Lord, art my hope. This is to me the ground of all your promises, and of all my expectation. Let another pretend merit, boast that he bears the burden of the day, and of the heat, that he fasts twice a week, and is not like the rest of men; it is good for me to cleave to God alone, and to place all my confidence in him. Others hope in other things; one, perchance, in science, another in worldly cunning, this man in his birth and quality, that in honours, another in some other vanity; I have despised and looked upon every thing as dung, because thou, O Lord, art my hope. If rewards are promised me, I will hope to obtain them through thee; if armies rise up against me, if the world rages, if the devil foams, if the flesh burns against the spirit, in thee will I hope. To know this is to live by faith; nor can any other say from his heart; Thou, O Lord, art my hope. If we have this wisdom, these sentiments, why do we delay to throw away entirely all miserable, vain, useless and seducing hopes; why not cleave with all the fervour of our soul, and the whole application of our mind, to this blessed hope! If any thing can be impossible*

impossible or difficult to him, seek another to trust in. But he can do all things by his word.—But do you doubt of his will? The testimonies of his will are exceeding credible to us. No man has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. And when did that supreme Majesty abandon any that hoped in him? who invites all to trust in him: He forsakes no one who relies on him: He will assist them, and deliver them, and rescue them, and save them. Ps. xxxvi. 40. Why? By what merits? Hear what follows: Because they have hoped in him. The cause is sweet, yet powerful and irrefragable. From whatever tribulation they shall cry out to me, I will hear them. Behold, number your tribulations; according to their multitude his consolations have rejoiced my soul. On condition that you convert not yourself to another, on condition that you cry to him and trust in him, and not in any base earthly thing, you will have placed your refuge most high. Friends, riches, and all earthly things are false, treacherous and weak. Cursed is he who trusts in man, or makes flesh his strength. Jer. xvii. 5. Trust not in princes, &c.

13. We must trust in the goodness and power of God, with entire confidence and peace. To hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, firm and sure. Heb. x1. 19. For hope is, in itself, that is, in its motives and on the side of God, absolutely certain, as his power and goodness cannot fail. None of them that expect thee shall be confounded. Ps. xxxiv. 3. Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. Eccl. ii. 11. Hope confoundeth not. Rom. v. 5. Hence the apostle expresses his unshaken hope in God with the utmost assurance. Rom. viii. 38.—2 Tim. i. 12. I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Our hope, indeed, is uncertain, and mixed with fear, on the side of our frailty and malice, that we may work our salvation in fear, humility and watchfulness.

fulness. But this fear is only accidental to hope, which does not imply it of its own nature. Nor does this fear produce any anxiety, but only fervour and watchfulness, and an entire distrust in ourselves. Sin indeed increases this fear, and abates the sweetness of hope. Perfect charity expels servile fear. By hope, our souls already possess a certain anticipation of the joys of heaven, and abound in holy joy that our names are written in heaven. *Rejoicing by hope, Col. iii. 1. St. Paul calls it, our most strong comfort, Heb. vi. 18. and David says; Let all rejoice who hope in the Lord.*

In hope, we likewise conceive fervour, strength and vigour in the practice of virtue; we perfectly take wing and fly. *Isa. xl. Hoping in the Lord, I shall not be weak. Ps. xxv. 1. Hope inspires courage, resignation, and joy, under all afflictions, labours and sufferings. Hope in the Lord, and do good. Ps. xxxvi.*

14. We must exercise acts of hope of the eternal joys of heaven. *Secondly*, Of the pardon of our sins, of grace, and of all the means of salvation. *Thirdly*, It is the same virtue, grounded on the same divine motives, by which we patiently confide in providence, in all trials and afflictions, and hope all temporal as well as eternal blessings. What confidence ought we not to have in our most tender heavenly Father, who knows all our necessities, and is able and most willing and desirous to relieve us? Poverty, want, calumnies, persecutions, &c. ought never to discourage us; for it is not in ourselves that we found our hope. We murmur and fret, because we, by a secret pride, build on our own merits, riches or strength. It is only in God we are to place our whole confidence, waiting patiently his time for our deliverance. When things seem brought to an extremity, then we must exercise this virtue more strongly. "When things

“ of the divine succour, says *St. Austin* in *Pf. 117*. Witness *Susanna*, the Three Children in the furnace, *Daniel* in the lion’s den, *Judith*, *Tobie*, and so many others. “ Can God ever abandon those on “ whom he has always continued to heap so many benefits? *St. Ambr. in l. de Jacob, c. 6**. Thus *Job* confided in God, when he said; *Although he should kill me, I will hope in him. Job xii. 15*. And *David*, *If camps stand against me, my heart shall not fear; If war rises against me, in this will I hope. Pf. xxvi. 3*. And he often repeats, *Pf. cxviii. In thy words I have over-hoped*. He not only hopes, but hopes above all that can be said or thought by man, in God’s mercy, which is infinite, far surpassing all hope; in his words, to endure beyond all time; in his promises, which exceed all merits; and in a happiness, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard.

D I S C O U R S E XXI.

ON DESPAIR, PRESUMPTION, AND TEMPTING
GOD, AND ON THE VIRTUE OF HOLY FEAR.

1. **T**HE vices against hope are despair and presumption, to which last we may join the tempting of God. Despair is a voluntary diffidence, by which a soul casts off the hope of attaining felicity or grace. It is one of the most enormous of all sins, after those which are directly contrary to the love of God, as blasphemy, sacrilege, &c. because it is the direct destruction of hope. Secondly, Because it deprives God of his darling attribute and chief property, that of his mercy; whence it is

* Si dormitatis inter medios clericos, &c.

more grievous than presumption. *Lastly*, Because it is of all sins the most dangerous, averts the soul the most of all others from God, is the source of all sins, and has the greatest opposition of all others with the spirit of penance. It may be accompanied with heresy, as an erroneous persuasion that God is not able or ready to pardon any sin, to give necessary graces, &c. Or it may be committed without any error in faith, out of sloth, or a violent attachment and slavery of the will to any passion, as of impurity, refusing by a positive act to labour or employ the proper and necessary means to overcome sin, or to gain heaven, whether on account of the difficulty and uncertainty of salvation, or for the love of the world, and unwillingness to renounce sin. It is not despair but sloth, if the soul, without any positive act of the will, cast away all hope, neglects the means of necessary virtue. It is pusillanimity and dejection, not perfect despair, if one, without totally giving up his salvation, falls into despondency about it, and some negligence in the practice of the means, which is a disposition towards this fatal precipice, and in itself most pernicious, as it weakens hope and slackens the sinews of virtue; in which only hope and confidence give courage, cheerfulness and fervour. Happy is he who hath had no sadness of mind, and who is not fallen from his hope. *Ecc. xiv. 2.*

2. All pusillanimity is to be vigorously resisted in the beginning. A soul assaulted by that devil, is to study and lay the axe to the root of her evil, whether it be by any passion, love of the world, sloth, scrupulosity, &c. The first remedy against the temptation is, to lay open the disorder, with entire confidence, to a charitable director, and follow faithfully his advice as an angel sent by God to conduct us. *Be not wise with thyself. Prov. iii. 7.* The *second* is, devout frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance; also, as often as judged expedient,

dient, to the holy communion. The *third* is, that a man study to obtain the most perfect degree of sincere humility. A *fourth*, Alms and the practice of good works; alms will be a great confidence before the high God. *Tob. iv. 12.* A *fifth* is, An entire distrust in himself, no ways secretly building on his own merits, virtue, &c. A *sixth* is, A firm hope and confidence in the divine goodness and succour. *God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. x. 13.*

3. To excite this confidence, a soul must meditate often on the goodness and mercies of God. *I myself will comfort you. Isa. i. 22.* Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him, because he has known my name. I am with him in tribulation: I will rescue him and will glorify him. *Pf. xc.* Come to me all you that labour and are heavy burdened; and I will refresh you. *Mat. xiii. 18.* She must penetrate her heart with the powerful and comfortable motives of hope, especially the clemency of God. *Why will you die, O House of Israel! Ezec. xviii. and xxxiii. Jer. iii. 1. Isa. i. 16.* How great is the mercy of the Lord, and how propitious, to those who are converted to him! *Eccl. xvii. 20.* The boundless merits of Christ, the love and mercy he testified for sinners on earth. *God so loved the world, &c. John iii. 16.* I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me. *Gal. ii. 20.* He came not to call the just, but sinners. *Mat. ix. 13.* and made it his delight to converse with them. The efficacy of holy penitence and the examples of happy penitents are to be likewise often considered; and prayers and aspirations of divine love and hope often repeated with fervour. *Be not pusillanimous in thy mind. Eccl. vii. 9.* Say to the pusillanimous; Be you strengthened and fear not. *Isa. xxxv. 3.* Act manfully, and let your heart be strengthened,

ened, all you that hope in the Lord. *Pf. xxx. 25.* Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the power of his strength. *Eph. vi. 10.* A dread of this mischief will be inspired by considering its malice, and how contrary it is to the filial confidence we ought to place in the goodness of God. How would a distrustful disposition in a son alienate and offend a tender beneficent father? How ungrateful, how injurious is such a behaviour? By considering likewise its dangers and evils; for it makes a soul without vigour, and incapable of virtue; and plunges her into all disorders: And this without pleasure or even temporal advantage, depriving the soul of all comfort, robbing her of the sweetness of hope, and overwhelming her with sadness and melancholy, and the greatest torment and anxiety man can fall into; and this by a fruitless crime, and for fear of courage to resist it: for which the will, always assisted by divine grace, has but to shake it off, by one resolute act.

4. Temptations of despair are never to be disputed with or mused upon; but resolutely rejected by a firm act of hope in God, the tender lover of our souls, with an effectual purpose to serve him. Such suggestions, how importunate soever, are only in the imagination: and there is more noise than danger in them. The devil, like a roaring lion, seeks to disturb us, because he cannot destroy us. Though the outlets of the senses and imagination are seized by him, he is not master even of them: God only suffers him to shew in them how hideous a monster he is, and to what despair he is condemned. But God is guardian of your heart against him, and forbids him to hurt your soul as he did *Job's*. *Job ii. 6.* *St. Bonaventure, Memor. sub finem*, advises a soul to make him this answer; If I were to be damned, I would still love God during this whole life; and so much the more ardently as my time is shorter. I will lose no part of it, but praise

praise him with all my strength, by every thought, word, work, and by every member. The pious *Hilton* says; Though all the devils in hell, appearing in bodily shapes, said to thee sleeping and waking; that thou shalt not be saved; or all men living on earth, and, were it possible, all the angels in heaven too, believe them not, and be not stirred from thy hope of salvation. Invoke God with the greater earnestness and confidence, remember the tenderness of his infinite mercies. *Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and of much mercy to all who invoke thee. Ps. lxxxv. 5. Bountiful to forgive. Isa. lv. 7. Rich in mercy. Heb. iv. 16. His mercies are above all his works. Ps. cxliv. 9.* Fly to the patronage of the Mother of God, the glorious Virgin Mary.

Some say their relapses and continual tepidity alarm them; but is dejection a means to make them rise? Hope is the principle and life of fervour. No one is capable of earnestness whilst he is persuaded his labour is lost. No one can love a happiness which he regards as the good of others, but not for himself. No one can have resolution to go through a penitential mortified life who looks upon it to no purpose. Hope gives the brave courage in battle, and inspires comfort, life, and vigour, to persevere to the end.

5. Presumption is a rash expectation of felicity, and the means to attain it. It may be joined with heresy, as if a man expects heaven by his own strength and good works; without grace, as the *Pelagians*; or by grace, without his own endeavours or good works. Or without heresy, as if a man, by an express act of the will, hopes to do penance when he pleases, and to gain heaven howsoever he lives. This last does not destroy the virtue of hope, but abuses its motives, and is a grievous and most dangerous sin against the Holy Ghost, or against the precept of sanctity and penance, and a resisting divine grace, which requires
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our co-operation. By this sin, a criminal man, who justly deserves hell, instead of averting that punishment by his tears and prayers, assumes to himself to dispose of God's mercy and grace, as if the master of it, and, as it were, says to God; Come with your graces when I shall please: and he behaves as if salvation were the work of his own will, and not of God's mercy. Those are guilty of presumption who expose themselves rashly to dangers of soul or body; or who in necessities neglect the ordinary means, or omit to have recourse to God: likewise all who are emboldened to sin, by relying on the divine mercy, by an express act of the will, though not such as sin only with a resolution of doing penance, as *St. Thomas* observes.

6. Tempting God is a sin, by which a creature makes a trial, whether any perfection be in God or no: whether he actually doubts of it, or only acts as if he doubted of it: as if a man neglects ordinary means in expectation of those which are miraculous and extraordinary. It is a vice against the virtue of religion, which commands us to honour God; and also against hope, because a rash confidence in his assistance. Those are guilty of this sin, who ask or expect revelations or miracles to gratify vanity or curiosity, of which they would make him a favourer, and abuse his omnipotence and infinite wisdom to a vain end. Likewise those who neglect the natural means of health, *e.g.* or other temporal or spiritual goods, expecting them miraculously; or who, without cause, present themselves to martyrdom, or rashly expose their lives; or who use the trials of judgment called *ordeal*, as trying a criminal by burning irons or the like, expecting that innocence should be protected by a miracle. Another manner of tempting God is to fix and prescribe to him a day, the manner

ner or bounds of his mercy, as the citizens of *Bethulia* are reproached by *Judith* c. 8. to have done.

7. The remedies against presumption are, To meditate the maledictions pronounced by the word of God against this crime, and the circumstances which aggravate its enormity; for it makes the divine goodness the motive and instrument of sin, and converts them into arms to fight against him with: it usurps his sovereign right and dominion, the disposal of his graces, and pretends to give him the law. 2. Perfect humility and the true knowledge of ourselves, and our own weakness, nothingness, and total insufficiency. 3. To place our confidence in God alone, and study not to put, by our pride or sloth, obstacles to his mercy and protection, without which we continually perish. 4. The fear of God, which is the check and curb to foolish presumption, and which moves us to speedy and perfect repentance; and to fervour and diligence in all things.

8. Hope produces a holy fear of God, which is reciprocally the maintainer of pious hope, the check and curb of the soul against presumption, and the mother of watchfulness and fervour. *You who fear the Lord, hope ye in him. Eccl. ii. 9.* He that hopes, fears to lose his happiness; and he who hopes without fear, is negligent; and he who fears without hope, falls into despair. This holy fear makes us hate and avoid sin. *The fear of the Lord hates evil. Prov. viii. 13. The fear of the Lord expels sin. Eccl. i. 27.* It converts the heart to God; and gives courage, strength and fervour against temptations, and is the beginning of charity. *They who fear the Lord, will seek the things that are pleasing to him. Eccl. ii. 19.* "The fear of God is the beginning of the conversion of a soul, the cleansing of vices, and the guardian of virtue," says *Cassian*,

Cassian, Inst. . 4. c. 39. They who fear the Lord keep his commandments. Eccl. ii. 21. They who fear the Lord will do good. Eccl. xv. i. The fear of God is the beginning of his love. Eccl. xxv. 16. It banishes the love and fear of the world, which are the great sources of sin; and it triumphs over all temptations, and contemns all the allurements, threats and torments of the world. "He who fears God, does not fear grief, pain, poverty, banishment, or death," as Lactantius remarks, l. 6. By it a soul is made impregnable to vice, courageous and constant in every virtue. In fear is the confidence of strength. Prov. xiv. 26. He who fears the Lord, shall not tremble or fear any thing, because he is his hope. Eccl. xxxiv. 16. Fear not those who kill the body. Mat. x. 26. Tremble not at their fear. 1 Pet. iii. 14.

Holy fear and awe is a homage we owe to God, as our Sovereign of infinite majesty and greatness. *If I am the Lord, where is my fears? Malachy.* To this virtue he promises all good gifts and graces. *The mercy of the Lord is from æternity to eternity on those who fear him. The seed of men which fear God shall be honoured. Eccl. x. 23. And Tobie recommends it under this title: If we shall fear God, we shall have many goods. Tob. iv. 23. Fear the Lord, all you his saints, there is no want to those who fear him. Ps. xxxiii. 10. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. Ps. iii. 1. It is the guardian of all virtues, as it is called by St. Jerome, Ep. ab Fabiola, and the most successful means to obtain, or recover and maintain the divine grace. "I have learned in truth, says St. Bernard, Serm. 55. in Cant. that nothing is so effectual to procure, recover or preserve grace, as to be at all times in fear before God." Blessed is the man who is always fearful. Prov. xviii. 14. "Fear when grace is present, lest you lose it; fear, when it is gone, to regain it; and fear when it is restored, lest you should not*

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"keep it well." It gives joy in the day of death. *It shall be well in the end with him who feareth the Lord, and he shall be blessed in the day of his death. Eccl. i. 19. Be in the fear of the Lord all the day, because thou shalt have hope in the end, and thy expectation shall not be taken away. Prov. xxiii. 17. Lastly, It fills the heart with uninterrupted exultation and comfort. The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart. Eccl. i. 11.*

9. This fear is wholesome and good, as long as it inclines us to secure more and more our salvation; it is a spur to us to all good, and a bridle holding us in from all evil. But then it must not disturb, trouble or deject us. This is an excess, and a dangerous crime. We must fear, but our hope must be the stronger. *That you abound in hope, and in the strength of the Holy Ghost. Rom. xv. 13.* Hope is the principle of inward strength and vigour; nor ought virtuous persons to fear hoping too much as long as they ground all their hopes only on God, and are earnest to neglect nothing to co-operate with his grace. But there is great danger in too weak a hope; souls naturally timorous must, above others, be sensible of this maxim, and be persuaded that distrust is a most dangerous temptation, that it draws a heart from God, cools his love, and insensibly produces a sloth and distaste in his service. It is our pusillanimity and want of confidence that makes us succeed so ill in our undertakings for God. *Man of little faith, Why hast thou doubted. Mat.* The saints triumphed over all dangers by their invincible hope in God. *In thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped, and thou hast delivered them. They trusted in thee, and were not confounded. Ps. xxi. 5, 6.* Fear then must never abate, but strengthen our entire confidence in the mercy of God.

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10. There is a fear of the world, as of its disgrace, or of human respects, of death, &c. This is most base and criminal; it prefers the creature to the Creator, and places its last end in it; and is severely condemned by Christ. *Do not fear those that kill the body. Mat. x. Do not love the world.*

1 *John ii.* There is a second criminal fear, called a *servilely servile*, or *purely servile* fear, when a soul so much fears torments as to be disposed rather to offend God than to suffer them, which is to make them the principal evil, and to prefer them to sin; a grievous disorder and enormity.

A fear of torments is indeed commendable, and a virtue in itself: For reason and nature teach us, to love ourselves, and to fear and shun pain, when it can be done without neglecting any duty. It is therefore good to fear sin, on account of hell and of the divine judgments. This fear of torments restrains not only the heart, but also the interior affection of the will from consenting to sin, as *St. Austin* observes in *Pf. 12. t. 4. p. 1439*, and *St. Thomas* shews that it converts the heart from the world to God, and is from the Holy Ghost: for it is supernatural, as its motive is the revelation of eternal torments. This is called absolutely *servile fear*; because slaves live in the fear of chastisements. It is the beginning of a sinner's conversion, separates his heart from sin, and prepares it to the love of God. "Unless a man begins by fear" to serve God, he will not arrive at love," says *St. Augustin* in *Pf. 149. n. 4. p. 1691*. "Fear prepares a place for charity. But when charity comes, this fear, which prepared the heart for her, is expelled. As much as she increases, it is abated. The greater the charity is, the less is the fear. But if there is no fear, there is nothing for charity to enter by. *St. Austin, Tr. 9. in ep. Joan. t. 3. par. 2. p. 888.* Fear is not in charity, but

perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain, And he that feareth is not perfected in charity. 1 John iv. 18.

11. A fourth fear arises not from the punishment, but from the guilt of sin, and the awe of the divine Majesty. It is called a *filial* or *chaste* fear; because it is the awe of respect and love, and the dread of the offence of our heavenly Father, as of dutiful sons and faithful spouses. This fear is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. *Isa. xii.* It is an effect and fruit of charity on which it is grounded; and it increases in proportion as charity is more perfect; for the more a man loves God, the more he fears to offend him, as *St. Thomas* takes notice, who adds that it remains in heaven, not indeed arming against sin or evil, but as to the profound sentiment of reverential awe. *The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever. Ps. xviii, 10.* In this sense the heavenly powers are said to tremble in the presence of God. *Job xxvi. 11. &c.* This is a homage which we owe to the sovereign Lord of all creatures, no less than that of love, gratitude, &c. *If I am the Lord, where is my fear? Mal. 1.*

12. The means to acquire, and nourish in our breasts this holy fear of God, are chiefly, the meditation of the last things, the constant walking in the presence of God, and devout prayer. *Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with thy fear; for I have trembled at thy judgments. Ps. xcvi. 1.* *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Prov. i. 7.* It is as a *paradise of benediction. Eccl. xi. 27.* Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man. Eccl. xii, 13.* We can never be secure in this mortal life. The angels fell in heaven, *Adam* in paradise, and *Judas* in the company of Christ. We are always exposed to enemies, and must always watch and arm ourselves

selves against them in fear and trembling, as *St. Paul* did. *The fear of the Lord expels sin, for he who is without fear cannot be justified. Eccl. i. 28. Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown. Eccl. xxvii.*

4. *A wise man will fear in every thing, and in the days of sins will beware of sloth. Eccl. xviii. 27. Fear for the past. Be not without fear for sin for sin that is forgiven. Eccl. v. 5.* Fear for the present, in a continual spirit of penance, watchfulness and prayer. In this dangerous sea, even in a calm, fear some hidden sand or rock, or some sudden storm. Fear ever to lose this necessary and saving fear; and pray earnestly never to be forgot in your danger. Fear for the time to come, especially for the great gift of perseverance, which we can never merit, and must continually pray and labour for. *No man knows whether he is worthy of love or hatred: but all things are reserved uncertain for the time to come.*

" We ought to fear exceedingly, brethren, says
 " *St. Austin, in Ps. lxxx.* It is not good that I
 " should give you a false security: I will not give
 " you what I myself have not. Fearing myself, I
 " terrify you. I would make you secure, if I were
 " myself so. I fear hell." Yet love, hope, and
 confidence in God's goodness, drive away all uneasiness and trouble of mind, whilst fear produces in us a laborious solicitude. We earnestly pray and watch; but rejoice to see our eternal lot in the hands of so good a God; *In thy hands are my lots. Ps.* Fearing our malice and inconstancy, we never cease to implore his powerful succour and protection.

DISCOURSE XXII.

ON CHARITY OR DIVINE LOVE.

1. **T**HE love of God is twofold: the *first* is the love of hope or *desire*; or as the schoolmen call it, of *chaste concupiscence*. By this we love God as known by faith, as our last end, and for our own happiness in possessing him. The *second* is the love of *benevolence* or *charity*, by which we love him for his own sake; or because he is infinitely good in himself. The former is more imperfect and inferior, and has more of the love of ourselves than of God, whom it loves, because he will make us happy. Yet it contains nothing inordinate, but is good, and a virtue. For it does not refer God to itself, any more than God referred his Son to the world, when he gave him for the world; but it precisely desires God to itself as its own supernatural last end. To love ourselves in the order of God's holy will, is certainly just, and a duty and virtue. This love of *desire* is the first ground of the virtue of hope, which varies from it, though it may also exercise its acts upon the motive of true charity, desiring to possess God, only to love and praise him more purely and more perfectly in the union of his glory.

2. The love of benevolence or charity, is the love of God above all things for his own sake, or because he is good in himself. The scriptures and fathers know no love of God which is not above all things, or from the whole heart. *Mat. xxii. 36. x. 37. Deut. iv. 29. Joel ii. 12.* Inferior acts of benevolence are too imperfect to claim the name or privileges of this virtue, though they, in a lower degree, belong to it, as imperfect acts or commencements,

ments. Charity is a love of *preference* above all things, esteeming and prizing God before all things, allowing nothing any competition or rivalry with him, disposed to lose all other things rather than God, is to renounce them if his will required it. *Who will separate us from charity?* 1 Cor. xiii. *He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.* Mat. x. It is likewise above all things as to its object, desiring all glory to God above all things, rejoicing in his infinite perfections, and saying from the heart: *To God alone be honour and glory.* Rom. xvi. "If any thing could be added to God from our works," says *St. Thomas* in 3 *dist.* 39. q. 1. a 1. ad 3, & 4. "he who has charity would do more for God's felicity than for his own."

But it is not necessary that charity should be the most sensible, in the affections of the heart; (though it be generally, but not always or essentially accompanied with an affective overflowing sweetness and feeling in the heart) for a person may weep more easily at the death of a friend than for sin, though he would prefer God to that temporal loss. Whether the intenseness and fervour of the love in charity ought necessarily to be the greatest, seems a dispute about the word, and may be decided by the two last conditions rightly understood, that the feeling is not necessarily to be the greatest; but the will must really have the greater esteem and preference of God and his will before all things, which can scarce be understood without a greater ardour to the service of God. "The least charity loves God more than the greatest passion can love gold and silver," says *St. Thomas*, 3 p. q. 70. a. 4.

3. Many say they love God, but deceive themselves. The heart cannot be seen, as an act of charity must be. 1 *Interior*, because from the heart. 2. *Sovereign*, or above all things, because from the whole heart; above the love of father or mother. "The measure of loving God is to love without measure,"

"measure," says S. Bernard, *De dilig. eo.* 3. *Gratuitous.* "The motive of loving God is God himself.—God is not loved without a reward, though he is to be loved without the view of a reward, —True love deserves a recompence, but does not ask it." *ibid.* 4. It is universal, keeping faithfully all God's commandments.

The chief marks that charity reigns in a christian heart are, a sovereign horror of sin, and diligent flight of all dangers and occasions of it; a constant watchfulness; an earnest care of salvation, and use of all the means to attain it; unwearied labour in the pursuit of virtue, and zeal to promote the honour of God and his holy love; a holy uniform conduct of life and actions; fraternal charity; the hatred of the world and its vanities; the constant remembrance and desire of heaven; joy and constancy to labour and suffer for God.

The contrary signs shew the love of God to be wanting in a soul; as a life of pleasures, sloth, vanity and curiosity; love of the world; mixture of any other foreign affection *in thy whole mind.* We must love ourselves and all other things only for God and to God. In this christians deceive themselves, and divide their hearts between God and the world. He deserves and challenges our whole heart, and all its affections. *Woe to the man with a double heart. Eccl. ii. 13. Their heart is divided; now they shall perish. Ose x. 2.* He loves God less who loves any thing with him not for his sake. "Christ will have no partnership; he will possess alone what he has bought at so great a price.—" "When men make a part in their heart to God, and a part to the devil, God, offended at the affront, departs, and the devil possesses the whole," says St. Austin, *Tr. 7. in Joan.* This is a spiritual adultery, and an infidelity to our heavenly spouse, who says; *I will espouse thee to myself for ever; and I will espouse thee to myself in fidelity, and thou shalt know*

know that I am the Lord. *Ose* ii. 19. Our love ought to be most firm; constant under all trials; exercising all our strength and power in every action; nay, were it possible, it ought to be immense as God is, infinite as God is. It must at least occupy and fill our whole heart, and vigorously employ all our faculties. *He who says that he knows God, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar.* 1 *John* ii. 4. *If any one loves me, he will keep my word.* *John* xiv. 23. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* *John* xiv. 21. *Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in truth.* 1 *John* iii. 18. *Whoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.* *James* ii. 10. "Because he breaks the charity on which the whole law depends," says *St. Austin*, *ep. 29. ad Hierom. t. 2. p. 45. ed. Lov.* 5. Charity must be active and fervent. "Love cannot be idle," says *St. Austin* in *Pf. xxxi**. And *St. Thomas*, "Love does great things, and thinks them little: does many things, and thinks them few; works long, and thinks it very short." *Opusc. 60.* 6. Charity ought to be pure, without mixture, or a disrelish of the practices of penance and virtue, hard-heartedness to the poor, &c. As love is interior, we cannot judge of it, even in ourselves, but by these exterior marks: for it does not consist in protestations or words, too often apt to lie and deceive.

4. A modern sect of false contemplatives called *Quietists*, pretended to establish a pure habitual state of disinterested divine love, in which a soul should be, in her superior or rational part, stripped of all desires, hope or feeling; rendered perfectly indifferent as to her own salvation and damnation, suspended in inactive contemplation on God, fixed on him by pure faith and quiet of mind from all desires; lastly, not concurring to or answerable for

* "Dilectio vacare non potest."

whatever passes, even criminally, in the lower or sensible part of the soul. Which proposition contain many fanatical errors. For we call that love interested and mercenary which seeks itself, or some recompence out of God, not that which seeks God himself. 2. In the most perfect habit of charity there always remains the habit of the love of desire and of hope, and acts of each are to be often formed. 3. All men are obliged to have hope; also to pray for bliss; consequently to have an effectual desire for it. 4. God is amiable for his benefits to us, and as our Redeemer; consequently to be loved also under this respect. 5. We are bound to wish our neighbour's happiness; and why not our own. 6. We are created to bliss; therefore are to desire it. In like manner as to the fear of hell.

The love of desire easily leads to and terminates in the love of true charity. For he who truly loves God as good to him, easily mounts to love him as good in himself. Nay, the love of charity itself naturally inclines the heart to desire him strongly. For love always desires the union of the object which it loves, and produces a vehement impulse or effort towards it.

5. Charity is a special gift of God, the chief of all his commandments, the friendship of a creature with his God, the mother, queen and soul, or form of all virtues, without which there is no true virtue meritorious of eternal life. Habitual charity is not the person of the Holy Ghost, though it brings into the soul his special presence, but a supernatural quality or habit infused by God, by which God is loved for himself above all things, and all that are capable of bliss for God. It is a theological virtue, because its object in every respect is only God, and in the most noble manner. It is a special, and the most excellent gift of God, infused only by his grace in our souls. *The charity*
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of God is poured forth in our souls, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us. Rom. v. 5. It is by the same theological virtue, because on the same motive, that we love ourselves, and all men and angels for the sake of Almighty God; as when we love a man, we love his children, servants, and all that belong to him for his sake. God declares this precept of loving him with our whole heart, *the greatest and the first commandment*; Mat. xxii. 38. and that the love of our neighbour is the second and the next to it: he adds; *On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. ib.* For all the ten commandments may be reduced to the love of God and of our neighbour! which two commandments are strictly but one and the same, viz. this of holy charity, as St. Austin observes.

Whence St. Paul calls the love of our neighbour the fulfilling of the law. For *if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Rom. xii. 6.

6. Charity is the friendship of a man with God*. *Thy friends are too much honoured, O God. Ps. cxxxviii. Made partakers of the friendship of God. Sap. vii. Abraham was made the friend of God. James ii. 23. You are my friends. John xv. 14.* Friendship is defined by the philosopher, "A mutual benevolence, with some communication of goods and counsels, grounded on a resemblance of nature or manners." Love of *desire* suffices not; *it must be a benevolence*, and this mutual, and known on both sides; for no one is a friend of another without knowing it: Benevolence may be in one; but this must be reciprocal, to make it friendship. Indeed, as man can never love God to an equality with his love, or what he deserves, this is a friendship, not of equality but of excellency, where each party loves according to his condition and power. Here is a mutual communication of

* Read St. Thomas, 2. 2a. q. 23. a. 1. & F. Honore Ecla. Contempt. T. 3. c. 1. § 2. p. 27.

goods, as the philosopher requires, when he says; "All things are common amongst friends." God bestows on us his graces and favours; declares us his sons, and makes us partakers of his treasures and kingdom. We make him the return of our thanks, our hearts, and the sacrifice of ourselves and actions. He imparts to us the knowledge of his mysteries. *Can we conceal from Abraham what I am going to do? Gen. xviii. 17. I will not call you servants; for a servant knows not what his master does. John xv. 15.* We cannot sufficiently admire, love and thank God for his wonderful goodness and condescension, in admitting us to his divine friendship, or esteem its dignity, honour and advantages; so we must contemn, forego, and cheerfully suffer all things, to make ourselves worthy of it. Why do we not say with *Politianus* the courtier mentioned by *St. Austin, Conf. l. 8. c. 6.* What do we aim at or pretend to by all our toils and dangers? To obtain the inconstant favour of the Emperor. Behold I am this moment the friend of God, if I only will.

7. Charity is the mother and queen of all virtues and the most noble amongst the theological. *Of these charity is the greater. 1 Cor. xiii. 13.* "Charity is the most excellent of all virtues," says *St. Thomas*, "as it attains God to rest in him." *2 Qa. q. 25. a 6.* It remaineth in heaven when faith and hope will be no more. Charity never falleth away. *ib. v. 8.* It only changes the state of its object in glory. It is the form, the life and soul of all other virtues; for, though they may be true virtues without charity, yet without it they are dead, and without their form, or the power of meriting before God. "How great is charity, which if it be wanting, in vain all the rest are possessed; if it be, all things are with it" cries out *St. Prosper, Sent. 32.* *St. Paul* assures us, *1 Cor. xii.* that though he should speak with the tongues of men and angels, if he had not charity, he should be only as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, *i. e.* empty noise; and if

if he had the gift of prophecy, and should know all mysteries and secrets of grace and nature, and had faith so as to be able to remove mountains; and had not charity, he was nothing; and though he should give all his goods to the poor, and deliver his body to the flames, if he had not charity, it would profit him nothing. "Have charity, and thou wilt have all things: for, without it, nothing will profit, whatever thou canst have," says *St. Austin*, *Tr. 32. in Joan. p. 529. t. 3.* *St. Thomas* proves, that it is the form of all virtues, because it directs their acts to their supernatural last end, gives them their beauty and tendency, which is their perfection before God, and makes them meritorious of eternal life, as the artificial disposition of the colours by a skilful hand, gives the form and beauty to a piece of painting. He shews also that it is the mother of all virtues, because it commands the exercise of all other virtues, and transforms them all, and even the most ordinary actions of life performed by it, into a new and far more noble order of perfect virtue. For every action, even the least and meanest, becomes a most perfect virtue before God, if performed by the motive of perfect love; for he considers not what is offered, but chiefly from how pure and ardent a charity.

8. The love of God is something so excellent and so great, that no glorified spirit in heaven, nor any creature that is or can be framed, can do any thing more sublime, more noble or high. All the powers of men and angels can do nothing better or greater than to employ themselves in this holy love, which incomparably excelleth all other works and supernatural virtues. All the blessed spirits in heaven have to all eternity no other occupation than to contemplate and love the infinite ocean of all good, and to rejoice in him; for whether they adore, praise, thank or glorify his boundless Majesty, or execute faithfully his will in the ministry in which he places them, they do all in the seraphic ardours

ardours of pure love; and can no more cease one moment from repeating the acts of his love than they can cease to be happy. What is far more, this is the incessant and eternal employ of God himself, who from eternity to eternity is continually taken up in loving and enjoying himself, and his own infinite perfections. He even takes the title of love itself, being the pure fire of infinite love. *God is charity.* 1 *John* iv. because he is himself essentially boundless love, and all that he does, proceeds from pure love. Likewise because he communicates to us by his grace this divine charity, which is a participation of his own; and he requires nothing from us only that we love him. All other things which he commands us, are only helps to this love, or the accomplishment and exercise of it. And nothing is more indispensable, more just, more profitable or more glorious than that we should render, without ceasing, this homage of our love to him, who is infinite goodness, and whom we can never love so much as he deserves.

9. Charity justifies us, blots out all our sins, sanctifies our souls, and renders them the objects of God's love. *I love those who love me.* *Prov.* viii. 17. *Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much.* *Luke* vii. 48.

It makes the service of God sweet and easy. By it, labours and sufferings for God, are pleasure to the heart. It fills the soul with perpetual joy, and joy which the world can never take from her, and places her under the special providence of God, so that nothing can hurt her. *The Lord keeps all who love him.* *Psalms* cxxiv. 20. It crowns all her actions and moments, and loads her with merits, and obtains by every act a new increase of grace. *He shall receive the crown of life which God has promised to those that love him.* 1 *Peter* i. 12. *Partners of the divine nature.* 2 *Peter* i. 4. *Sons of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs of Christ.* *Rom.* viii. 16. *Every one*
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who loves is born of God. 1 John iv. 7. He who abides in charity, abides in God, and God in him. 1 John iv. 16. If any one loves me, he shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him. John xiv. 21. Like a devouring fire, it consumes all earthly affections in the soul, commanding all her powers. It unites us to God, as the property of love is the closest union; and it transforms us into him, and communicates to us the participation of his infinite riches and graces. He who cleaves to God is one spirit with him. 1 Cor. vi. It expels servile fear. Fear is not in charity; but perfect charity casteth out fear, because fear hath pain: and he that feareth, is not perfected in charity. 1 John iv. 18. It also makes a soul superior to all evils. Love is strong as death. Cant. viii. 6. "A great word," cries out St. Austin in Ps. xii. "the strength of charity could not be expressed in a more pompous manner. For who resists death? — Men resist fire, water, the sword; they resist powers; they resist kings. Death only comes, which no one resists; nothing is stronger than it. Therefore charity is compared to its strength." In it St. Paul could say; I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. viii. 38, 39. Sufferings, crosses and torments are its fuel. Instead of abating it, they make it blaze higher, and burn more vehemently, as stubble meeting a raging fire. To those that love God, all things co-operate to good. Rom. viii. 28. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods devour it. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing. Cant. viii. 7.

Richard of St. Victor, in his book on the degrees of charity, shews how sweet, how invincible, how insatiable under heaven it is, and that it knows not the
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very name of pain or difficulty in the service of God. *Lastly*, It brings along with it, or perfects all other virtues; repentance for and perfect hatred of sin, patience and joy in suffering, perfect obedience to all God's commandments, and the accomplishment of all our duties; sincere humility; for the knowledge of God gives us the most feeling knowledge of ourselves and our own baseness and nothingness: firm confidence in him; for a soul by love resting in God and dwelling in him, fears nothing from creatures, and sets heaven, earth and hell at defiance: fortitude; for no affliction, obstacle or danger can terrify or move a heart united to God by love, and joined to the sovereign master of the universe: chastity: for the love of God excludes all mixture of profane love of creatures. It is particularly jealous of the least affection or spot of impurity; creating a perfect cleanness of heart, constancy, liberty, purity of affection, fervour in works: zeal to promote all ways the divine honour; love of solitude, and hatred of the world, to enjoy the commerce of God's attention to every duty and occasion of virtue. A perpetual watchfulness over ourselves and all our thoughts and actions; for it is quick-sighted to discover the least foreign, secret, profane flame which arises in the heart, and is solicitous and careful, immediately to extinguish and extirpate the least spark. But the greatest of all its privileges and prerogatives is, that it overcomes God himself, and forces him who is all-powerful and invincible, to bow down and humble himself to it; it disarms his hand when it is ready to fall upon and crush the sinner; it has the power to make him in a moment revoke his sentence of condemnation, and changes his anger and justice into mercy and love; it triumphs over his heart, and obliges him to exalt a creature into a partnership of his friendship and of his own glory. "If charity be so great
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"and so amiable when described, what is it when
"possessed," cries out *St. Austin, Tr. 7. in ep.*
Joan. t. 3. p. 876.

10. God has commanded us to love him with our whole hearts, and with all our strength. *Deut. vi. Mat. xxii. 1 Cor. xiii.* This is the first and greatest of all the commandments; *first*, in its extent, for it includes all the rest and is the accomplishment of the whole law: *secondly*, in the intention of the supreme Legislator, who refers all the rest to it, and makes it alone the end of them all. *Charity is the end of the precept. Tim. i. 5.* *Thirdly*, In dignity and merit, for it gives the value to every other virtue. *Fourthly*, In order; for it is the foundation of all christian perfection. *Fifthly*, In its duration; for it subsists for ever. *Sixthly*, In excellency; for it is the supreme perfection and elevation at which any rational creature can arrive.

If this sovereign love of God above all things be not the ruling affection of our hearts, we transgress this first and greatest of the divine commandments. *He that loves not, abides in death. 1 John iii.*

14. We are bound moreover always to advance in divine charity, in which consists the perfection of virtue. *They shall go from virtue to virtue. Ps. xxxiii. Pray that your charity abound more and more. Phil. i. 9. May God give you increase, and make your charity abound more and more to one another. 1 Thess. ii. 12. The inward man is renewed from day to day. 2 Cor. iv. 16. He that is just, let him be justified still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still. Apoc. xxii. 11.*

11. The perfection of a thing consists in the attaining the end for which it was created. The ultimate end of a rational creature is God. Our perfection, therefore, must necessarily consist in divine charity, which unites our soul to God, places us in our proper centre, and brings us to our last end. We shall obtain it perfectly only in heaven,

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where our union with God will be made perfect; and this is the end of the precept of charity, which will be only fulfilled in the state of glory. It is of the perfection of the end of the precept that we are to understand *St. Austin, l. de perfectione justitie, c. 8. t. 10. p. 175.* and *St. Bernard, Serm. 150. in Cant. p. 1488* which they say no man can arrive at in this mortal life. But the precept itself, or the obligation of the precept, may certainly be fulfilled by just men on earth, who love God with a true love of esteem and preference above all things. But no one can have this love who does not burn with a desire, and who does not continually labour to advance in this holy and pure charity. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord. 2 Peter iii. 18.* What a noble career, what a spacious field is opened to a christian soul in the immensity of divine love, in which he is always to advance; yet how great progress soever he shall have made in it, he will ever see an infinity beyond him, and that his love still falls infinitely short of what God deserves, whose boundless amiable perfections infinitely surpass all the homages of creatures. This reflection ought vehemently to excite us to apply ourselves to love God, to the utmost power of our narrow capacity, and continually to labour in enlarging it.

12. All are particularly obliged to form an act of divine charity, when they first arrive at the use of reason, or at the light of faith; also in every probable danger of death, both to put on the armour against their spiritual enemies, and to go forth to meet their spouse with the lamp of charity burning in their hands, and clothed with the nuptial garment. Likewise, if such an act of love be necessary to repel any dangerous temptation to sin; and when it is necessary to raise a soul from mortal sin. *Lastly*, Acts of divine charity are to be frequent; for a considerable delay or intermission would be a
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mortal sin, as has been said of faith and hope. They are comprised in sincere acts of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, oblation of ourselves to God, &c. They may daily be formed to accompany all our actions, and the exercise of other virtues.

St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and others teach, that for any virtuous action to be meritorious of grace or of eternal life, it must not only be done in a state of grace, and for some supernatural motive, but must also proceed from and be directed by a motive of actual charity. For the apostle, *1 Cor. xiii.* speaks of actual charity, when he declares it necessary even to faith, martyrdom, &c. that they may merit eternal life; for the characters he gives it, that it is patient, &c. denote actual not habitual charity, *James iv.* the crown of life is only promised to those that love him; and *Matt. x.* &c. only those works which are done in the name of Christ, or for him; but it suffices if it virtually be the principle of any action and the real motive to the practice of it. For this, it should be frequently renewed in the day, as *Bellarmin* and others observe. It is adviseable to make a new act of divine love in every considerable new employment, by raising our hearts a-fresh to God, in some thought or aspiration of praise, adoration, oblation, or the like. The greater fervour with which this is done, the higher will be the degree of merit in every work.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

ON THE MEANS TO OBTAIN AND IMPROVE DIVINE CHARITY IN OUR SOULS, AND ON THE ACTS OF THIS VIRTUE.

1. **H**ERE, more than on any other occasion, prayer is the first means to be employed, and has the greatest success. It is true, all good is the proper object of man's will, which is made to love it. But charity being a supernatural love, and the perfection of our supernatural life, the will, with all its efforts, can never obtain it by its own strength. Prayer is therefore a resource absolutely necessary on this occasion, and we must ask to receive. But we must ask it with a perseverance, fervour and earnestness proportioned to so great a gift. This will continually enlarge and fit our souls more and more to receive it, by increasing our languishing desires and thirst of it. This will move almighty God to bestow on us this treasure, which he only commands us most severely to ask of him out of an infinite desire of enriching us with it. Hence, to make him this petition is to make him the prayer which is of all others the most agreeable to him, it is to beg that he execute his own designs upon us, and that he would be pleased to satisfy his own love and ardent desires. But alas! few ask this divine charity of God, because they esteem it little, and their desires of it are very tepid and languishing, they scarce think of asking him this greatest of all his gifts. If we desire to obtain this his most precious and holy love, we must conjure him without intermission, and with the greatest earnestness of which we are capable, that it will please him to kindle this his divine flame in our breasts.

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The second means to procure holy charity is the mortification of self-love its capital enemy in our souls. For it will enter in proportion as we purify our hearts to receive its contrary. The diminution of concupiscence is the increase of charity, as *St. Austin* says; and charity is perfect when there is no concupiscence. By self-love is meant not that love of virtue by which we love ourselves in God, and desire our happiness in him; but that inordinate love, by which we seek the satisfaction of our senses and inclinations in perishable goods, which is the source of all our passions and sins, which easily insinuates itself into all our actions, and which often dignifies itself under the name of every virtue. This we must study perpetually and universally to resist and destroy in all its branches, but especially in our predominant passions. Without this we shall only be governed by the inclinations of nature. Can the love of God ever find place in such a heart? We must first learn the holy hatred of ourselves, before we can obtain divine charity. If we truly hate ourselves, that is, the corruption of our heart, we shall rejoice to mortify all that flatters sensuality, pride, or any inclination of corrupt nature. Without this crucifixion of the source of our passions, without this hatred of ourselves, our virtue will be only exterior, our devotion rather in the senses and lips than in the heart, and all our exercises of piety, not so much the fruit of grace as of humour, constitution, or a happy education. The continual victory over our own inclinations, a continual practice of the mortification always to overcome ourselves, even in little things, as in refusing our eyes and other senses too great liberty, even in ordinary things, is a great good, and the shortest way to a perfect love of God. The saints only arrived at it by the means of a constant course of self-denial. The most profound humility is above all others, the most essential

sential means to remove the principal obstacles to divine love in our hearts, which are those put by pride. "Two loves have made two cities; the love of ourselves to the contempt of God founded the earthly city; but the love of God to the contempt of ourselves the heavenly city, says *St. Austin, l. 14. de civ. Dei, 8.* The first must be destroyed to lay the foundation of the second. "Whoever desires to nourish charity, let him labour in extirpating concupiscence," says the same Father, *l. 83. quæ. & qu. 36.*

3. The love of God is to be pure, without the mixture of any love which is contrary to it. He who loves any creature, not for God, loves God so much the less, and not with his whole heart. Pure love sacrifices all the affections of the soul entirely to God. Charity seeks not its own interests. *1 Cor. xiii. 5.* It does not exclude the desire of our own happiness, as the *Quietists* pretended; which would be inordinate: for no man can be indifferent to his own damnation or salvation, even on any pretence of having no other will than that of God's greater glory; for the will of God is that we save our souls: and though the love of God must be the predominant affection of our soul, even above our fear of hell, yet no one is to make chimerical suppositions.

We are even bound to love ourselves, our neighbours, and all God's creatures; but in God and the order of his providence, as he has ordained us to love them, and only for his sake, and as it is his will we should love them, not to seek merely ourselves or our own satisfaction; for this is the corruption of nature, and a defiling of the love of God with an impure mixture. Oh! did we see into the bottom of our hearts, what secret researches of self-love, what hidden monsters which we caress, should not we discover there? What self-love, what subtle attachments to our own will or private judgment,

judgment, what inclinations of corrupt nature entertained, what tenderness for this perishable body, what sentiments unworthy of and contrary to the pure love of God! The most perfect always bewail an odious mixture of this earthly love with their love of God, and it was their constant application to labour to purify their hearts more and more from it; and to discover the least earthly filth in their affections. We are so much blinded by self-love, that we never remove its film from before our eyes, to discern the disguises of our affections, and that sloth which often enervates us, that pride which frequently puffs us up, that envy which secretly gnaws us, and that sensuality which continually seduces us. To root out this evil, a strict watchfulness over the motions of our hearts, a constant practice of the mortification of our senses, will and inclinations, and assiduous prayer and holy meditation, are our indispensable duty. Thus shall we dispose ourselves to the love of God. Divine charity, as it is made more and more perfect, will consume and destroy self-love, and subdue all our affections to itself.

4. The devout and frequent consideration of the motives of divine love is the next means. The knowledge of the object goes before the love, and excites it. The will is blind, unless the understanding presents its light, and shews it the beauty and perfections which command its love. The goodness, the greatness, the perfections, the benefits of Almighty God must be meditated thoroughly, to give the soul a true knowledge of God, and to inflame the heart. Likewise, no one can love God, who does not desire often to think on him. What should we think of the love of a friend, who should never love our company, or even bear to think of us? We are commanded to love God with our whole soul. The understanding is part of the soul as well as the will. It must then be employed
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in love, in its manner, *i. e.* by meditating the graces and goodness of God; and *secondly*, by the submission and sacrifice of its lights and knowledge to true love. And as it inflames the will by its light, so is it again enlightened and purified in its knowledge from the fire of love in the will, which sends back its lights more pure after they have passed through its flame. Thus, these two powers, by entertaining a perpetual commerce of light and love, mutually assist each other in this holy exercise.

5. Though the understanding concurs to love, it is properly the act of the will. It is then principally by the exercise of the affections in loving, that this gift is to be improved; the other means being rather preparatory to it. Sentiments of the heart are the food of love, and nourish and entertain it. By them, the soul always mounts higher: for every act of love contributes to increase the habit, and to make the following act more intense, more pure, and more perfect. Without the continual repetition of these acts, love soon languishes, and is at last extinguished, by the love of creatures entering in its place. For a human heart cannot be without some love; for love is its life. Hence, creatures quickly fill a soul which neglects continually to feed itself on God. Besides, love is always making presents to its beloved. That heart does not love, but is governed by self-interest, which always asks and never gives. God bestows his graces and favours; he never ceases to shower them down upon us. But then he expects a return to his love, without which his commerce with us is interrupted and broke. In our extreme indigence, can we give any thing to God? He is the inexhausted fountain of all treasures, and we are poor and empty; yet he finds something in our poverty itself to exact from us. This is our heart, our love. And this he requires, to enrich and inflame it. For all his eternal love, and his infinite goodness and benefits,

benefits, he only exacts our love in return. He says only, *Son, give me thy heart.*

And this he does too for our interest. And shall we sacrilegiously refuse him this, to give it the devil? We ought never to cease paying him this sacrifice both by exterior and by interior acts of love. By exterior, in suffering with patience and joy, in labouring assiduously in the practice of every virtue, in an exact fidelity in keeping his commandments and counsels, and by offering and directing all our thoughts and actions to God out of an intention of pure love. It sits on the middle of the heart as on its throne, surrounded by all the virtues: it puts them all in motion, and gives them their value and merit; it directs all the senses, all the affections of the heart, and all the powers of the soul. It is insatiable in labouring and suffering for God, and never weary, dejected, or pusillanimous in accomplishing the holy will, and in promoting the honour of God.

6. Interior acts of the will give to the exterior all their virtue, and are to be perpetual, that the soul may live and breathe only by divine love. They are principally made by acts of *complacency*, of *benevolence*, of *adoration*, *praise*, &c. By acts of *complacency*, we rejoice by love in the infinite happiness and perfections of which God is possessed; That he is infinitely good, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful and perfect. By love we feel a pleasure and joy in all the goods which he whom we love, enjoys; and if we love God above all things, we must feel a greater joy in the sovereign excellencies which we contemplate in him than for whatever we could possess in ourselves. In these sentiments we may say to him; "I praise and adore you, because you are my infinite God, and are alone him that is. I rejoice to consider you so great, so good, so powerful, and so perfect; to see

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that no creatures could ever alter or diminish your perfections and excellencies; and that all that are or can be, must obey your power, and through your mercy, or through your justice, serve to your honour. How does my soul rejoice that you are the necessary independant being, and that whatever we are or have we necessarily receive from you; that by you and in you we have our very being, which, if you ceased to conserve, we should, that moment, entirely lose. I am a nothing; but you are the great all; I am ignorance and darkness, but you are infinite wisdom; I am weakness but you are strength; I am poverty, but you are riches; I am misery, but you are sovereign happiness and perfection. But unite, by your gracious mercy, your greatness, your wisdom, your strength, your riches, your bliss, to my poverty and nothingness; that in you I may rejoice, and my defects be supplied."

7. Offer these your acts of complacency, in union with those of all the angels and saints in glory to all eternity; but especially in union with those which God conceives in his own perfections, in the infinite knowledge and love of himself, rejoicing exceedingly in this his boundless and holy complacency which he enjoys in himself; for which we ought to bless, praise and thank him evermore, and desire him the homages of all his creatures. This is the eternal, most sweet occupation of the blessed.

8. By acts of *benevolence*, we must wish to God, and desire to give him all glory possible, because due to him, and he is infinitely worthy of it; we must give ourselves up to him without reserve; must praise and bless him with all our strength; and seeing that we are able to do this too imperfectly, we must invite all creatures to join with us in this homage, with the three children; *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino: laudate & superexal-*
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tate eum in sæcula. Dan. iii. and with David; Laudate Dominum de cælis; laudate eum in excelsis; (from the highest heavens) Laudate eum omnes angeli ejus. Ps. cxlviii. As the soul finds all this too little to satisfy her desires, she joins the praises of Christ as man, and above all the infinite love of the three adorable persons of the Blessed Trinity. God comprehends his infinite perfections, and loves his own excellency with an infinite love, which they deserve still farther, because the soul will behold God, and love him far more perfectly in heaven, she desires ardently to go thither, there to praise God, to bless, to love and serve him perfectly, crying out with the royal prophet; *Educ de custodia animam ad confitendum tibi;* that I may sing your praises night and day, without interruption, and to endless ages.

She flies the least sin far more than death, as the injury and sole evil of her beloved, and she is pierced with grief as often as she sees him offended.

She sings in her heart; *Regi sæculorum immortalis & invisibili, soli Deo honor & gloria, in sæcula sæculorum, Amen. 1 Tim. i. 17. Benedictus es Domine Deus, & laudabilis (worthy of praise and glory) & gloriosus & superexaltatus in sæcula. Dan. iii. 52. Iste Deus meus, & glorificabo eum: Deus patris mei, & exaltabo eum. Exod. xv. 2.*

9. But, O God of glory, how shall I glorify you? how shall I praise you? I am not able; nor can all creatures do it worthily. Yet this my incapacity overwhelms me with joy in your incomprehensible greatness; because you alone are able to do it. Glorify yourself therefore great God; exalt your own praise and greatness. You know, O Lord, that I most earnestly desire to give you every moment, all the glory, honour and praise that your elect, angels and men will offer you for all eternity. Accept, at least, my desire, and my good-will.

I beseech you, O God of glory, and I conjure you by every thing that renders you great and glorious, to remove from my heart whatever can be an obstacle to your glory in me; and that you place me in that condition in which I may be able to glorify you in the most perfect manner. As you see in the treasures of your infinite wisdom, the innumerable ways by which men may be conducted to you; lead me, if you please, by that which you know may most advance your high glory; whatever that be, it is no matter, provided you by it inseparably attach me to your holy will, and to yourself, that I may consummate the holocaust of myself, in glorifying you.

10. By every breath that I draw, every step that I take, every word that I speak, every thought that I form, I desire to give myself entirely to you, my God, and to pay you as much honour, joy, thanks and love, as all the angels and men shall be able to give you for all eternity, so often do I give you this my heart, with all the affection possible. I earnestly beg that you receive and keep it for ever; that you extirpate out of it all other love and affection, that it may be, not a heart, but a furnace of pure flames of your most ardent love.

11. To you do I surrender my heart to have no other will but yours, resigned without exception to receive whatever it shall please you to appoint. Even love among men produces a conformity of will, and a condescension to the will of one who is subject to failings and passions; how much more ought I to love and resign myself to your will, always just, most holy, and full of tenderness and mercy. It is just that I should have no will but yours. In this consists my sanctification. *Vocaberis voluntas mea in ea. Isa. lxxxii.* My own will is the most insupportable burthen, if I do not renounce it. I rejoice only in finding and following in all things your holy will; I will henceforward desire
nothing

nothing but your divine will. In all things this shall be my delight, my light, and the centre of my rest. *Tibi dixit cor meum exquisivit te facies mea; faciem tuam Domine requiram. Ps. xxvi. 8.*

D I S C O U R S E XXIV.

ON THE DANGERS OF THE WORLD.

THE two great causes of spiritual darkness are, *first*, sin and the love of creatures; *secondly*, a neglect of conversing with God, and of sufficient commerce with spiritual things. *First*, A soul always occupied on vanity and earthly things, conceives an esteem and love of them; by ever beholding, hearing, tasting, loving and possessing them; she is filled with them, and becomes blind, deaf, lame, cold, stupid and insensible to spiritual things. Thus *the earth has devoured them. Exod. xv. 12.* On which text *Origen in Exod. ib.* writes thus: “When
“thou seest a man whose thoughts are all of the
“earth, who acts for it, speaks of it, desires it only;
“doth not look up to heaven, doth not think
“on the things to come, doth not fear the judgments
“of God, nor desire his promises: when
“thou seest such an one, say, The earth has devoured
“him.” Created objects, if loved, have this quality, that they seduce the heart, and then blind the understanding. *For the enchantment of fooleries obscures good things, and the inconstancy of passion perverts sense. Sap. iv. 12.* Especially passions and sin blind the soul, wed her to this earth, and extinguish in her the feeling, and blot out the true ideas of heavenly truths. As a little dust or smoke, though
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it doth not blind; yet it prejudices the sight of the eye; so the least venial sin, the least passion, or the least attachment to creatures, obscures the spiritual sight of the soul, darkens the knowledge of God, and abates the fervour of heavenly desires. Therefore, to dispel the clouds which the world casts over our souls, we must draw our affections from it; which must be done by self-denial, and the mortification of all the senses, especially where there is danger of any eager earthly attachment.

The *second* cause of this blindness is, a want of sufficient diligence in prayer, meditation, and pious reading, in which we withdraw ourselves from the earth. As this malady is caused by conversing too much with the world, its cure must be wrought by sometimes retiring from it by prayer. *St. Ambrose* says, *l. de fugâ sec. c. 5. t. 1. p. 458.* "We must with Moses put off our shoes, that is, all earthly affections, and fly to the mountains, sequestered from the world." And in another place, *l. de bono mortis, t. 5. p. 382.* "Our soul must soar on high as the eagle, must mount above the clouds, and penetrate the heavens. The bird which falls low is often taken in nets, or caught in bird-lime, or entangled in snares. So is our soul. There is a snare in gold, bird-lime in silver, a pin in fond affections." If the obstacles are removed, then the divine light will shine upon us.

Again, God is the light. *I am the light of the world; he that follows me, walks not in darkness.* *John viii. 12.* The nearer therefore we approach to God, and the more we converse with him, the more we are enlightened. Also, by considering well spiritual things, we learn to know and esteem them, and receive a taste of them.

Lastly, God's light and grace is to be obtained by being fervently asked of him who is the Giver of all good gifts, and has ordained prayer to be their channel.

channel. We must then ask it without ceasing, for ourselves and for a blind world. Nothing but prayer can unseal its eyes. "What shall I do to help one whom his fever has made distracted?" "Pray for such," says *St. Augustin* in *Ps. 39*. That member must be dead that feels not its own pain; that patient must be incurable that is grown insensible of his disease.

What makes the world far more the object of the christian's hatred and abhorrence is, that it is the declared enemy of God, and of his holy law. Christ every where thunders out his curses against it. *Woe to the world. Matt. xviii. It hates me, because I give testimony that its works are evil. John vii. 7. I am not of the world. John viii. 23. My kingdom is not of this world. John xxiii. If the world hates you, know it hated me before you. John xv. 18. Because you are not of the world—therefore the world hates you. John xv. 19. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world. John xvii. 16. I pray not for the world. ib. v. 15. The spirit of truth which the world cannot receive. John xiv. 17.*

The apostles could not but deliver the same doctrine with their divine master. *St. James* says, *The friendship of this world is the enemy of God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God. Jac. iv. 4. And St. John, Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man loves the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. 1 John ii. 15. The whole world is seated in wickedness. 1 John v. 19.*

When we were enlisted into God's family, we renounced, in our baptismal vows, the world and its pomps no less than the devil. It is then an article of our faith that we are to look upon, and treat the world as our open enemy, and the enemy of our God; and that a christian who loves the world, and is imbued with its spirit, is a prevaricator,

tor, guilty of a breach of his allegiance to his God, a renegado and traitor.

What are we to understand by this world so hateful to Christ? Not the material frame of this universe, of which God is the author. Not all men who live in it; for God's servants, nay, the apostles themselves would then be condemned; but the number of these is small, in comparison of the great body of mankind, from which they differ in their spirit and manners. Hence, though they live in the world, they are not of the world. By it is then meant the great bulk of mankind, who govern themselves by the spirit and maxims of the passions, of the flesh, of the love of vanities and earthly pleasures.

This world is declared the enemy of virtue, and loaden with the most dreadful curses of heaven, because it is full of sin, and all made up of vanity, danger of sin, and maxims and a spirit opposite to that of Christ. It is full of sin, because seated in wickedness. 1 *John* v. All who are of it, are represented in scripture as composing a body of men who have ranged themselves under the standard of Lucifer, and shook off the yoke of Christ and his obedience; are marked with the character of the devil, and are members of his kingdom. Hence the devils are called the princes of the world. This is the true Babylon described by the prophets, as the retreat of dragons, and the abode of devils; its houses filled with wild beasts, ostriches and owls, which represent all vices; satyrs dancing in it, and syrens dwelling in its palaces of delights, i. e. devils inhabiting the souls of worldlings. Yet every thing in the world is not sin; and its innocent objects may be made a good use of; but every thing in it is vanity and danger, and is made by the wicked an instrument of sin.

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All that is in the world, says St. John, is concupiscence of the flesh, and concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life. 1 John ii. 10. These are the three sources of sin, viz. the pleasures of the senses, covetousness and pride of life, or love of honours, applause. Every thing in the world may be made an object of one of these; and it breathes nothing but what tends to flatter these sources of all the passions, and to inspire their maxims; consequently every thing in it is a danger to the unguarded.

It is of the sinful world that the prophet says; *God will rain down snares upon sinners. Ps. x. 7.* What a number of snares must it be filled with for them to be compared to drops of rain? snares upon all ages and degrees; snares in riches and in poverty, in honours and in disgrace, in prosperity and in adversity, in company and in solitude, at home and abroad. Every one of a man's own senses and faculties lays snares in his way; nor can he make one step without meeting with many. The prophet *Jeremie* had reason to cry out, *ch. xlviii. 43. Snares upon you, O inhabitants of the earth.* Did God open your eyes, as *St. Athanasius* tells us he did *St. Anthony's*, to see the whole world covered with snares entangled in one another, so that not a step could be made, which could escape them, we should cry out with that holy hermit: "Oh! who shall be able to avoid them all? We heard a voice from heaven, which answered *humility*. It is only a great distrust in ourselves, fear, watchfulness and prayer that can secure us from them. What makes our danger the greater is, that we carry about within ourselves a triple concupiscence of itself eager to catch at every bait laid in each snare. A man that is carrying gun-powder, how careful, how wary is he to meet nothing that can set it on fire? I have often admired the most scrupulous and excessive cautions used in that regard in armies, and in

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powder-magazines; notwithstanding which, accidents sometimes happen. Alas! we carry in our bosom a concupiscence more easily enkindled than gun-powder. Can we flatter ourselves with security whilst we walk amidst the dangers, nay play with them, and delight ourselves in them, without the least precaution or guard? "Do you love bird-lime, yet hope not to be caught in it," says *St. Augustin* *. How ought we to deplore blind worldlings, when we see them careless and negligent amidst such infinite dangers? What wonder if the world should be full of the miserable wrecks of souls. Not one ship in a thousand of those which sail in the ocean, perishes; nor is one man in a hundred of those that go to war, slain; but we may with tears say, how few souls escape in the sea of this world?

The spirit and maxims of the world shew still more clearly how much it is an enemy to God, as light and darkness are not more opposite than they are to those of the gospel. Christ came to destroy the first Adam, whose birth, and consequently his inclinations and affections are earthly according to the flesh, and the instinct of nature corrupted by its fall. This old man and his spirit still reigns in the world, and is the spirit of the world. The new man, or the man of grace, created and planted by Christ is built upon the destruction of the former, and is directly its opposite. This studies in all things to crucify the old man with his acts, and to live only by the movements of grace. His spirit therefore is the contrary to the former; so are also his acts, inclinations and maxims, which are in each conformable to their spirit.

If we compare together the maxims of the world and those of Jesus Christ, we shall find the one the

* *Viscum amas & capi non vis.*

very contrast of the other. The world applauds, pursues, and endeavours to inspire all with an esteem of earthly grandeur, honours, riches, vain amusements and delights. These are its beatitudes. Christ teaches to banish the foolish joys of the world, and the pleasures of the senses; to love humility and compunction; to be silent under calumnies, patient and meek under injuries and persecutions; to imitate an infant's simplicity; and to hate hypocrisy and dissimulation; to mortify the flesh, and fly all in the world that is apt to inflame any branch of concupiscence. He preaches the happiness of the cross, and beatifies poverty of spirit, meekness, and the like. If we desire to be disciples and members of Christ, we must be animated, and must live by his spirit, have his sentiments. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Jesus Christ. Phil. ii. 5. Whosoever have been baptized in Christ, you have put on Christ. Gal. iii. 27.*

It concerns us to examine what our spirit is, that of God or of the world, that we may discover to which of the two we belong. Many christians are for making a medley of their contrary maxims, and whilst they would fain reconcile them both together, create to themselves a spirit of their own choosing, according to their fancy, which they would flatter themselves not to be contrary to that of the gospel. They pray and detract with the same tongue; frequent both churches and play-houses; give some pence in alms, and squander away pounds in vanities; and so in other things. Such a contradiction in manners shews they are strangers to the true spirit of Christ. The false mother cries; *Let the child be divided. 3 Reg. iii. 26.* The world is content to get part of the heart; but God, the true Sovereign, will have all; all is his due; and his sanctity can allow no society with the world. Those then who find passions, as pride, a love of

ease or pleasures, or the like, reigning in their breasts, though they comply with some duties of religion, and call themselves disciples of Christ, belong to the world, condemned by him according to the degree in which more or less of its spirit reigns their hearts.

The world is more the object of a christian's fear and horror, as it is contagious. The holy scriptures, the fathers, and all other masters of a spiritual life, and daily experience proclaim aloud on every side this its more pernicious quality. In short, three reflections will suffice to set this truth in a clear light. *First*, on the assiduity with which its vanities strike the senses; *secondly*, on the malignancy of its conversation; and *thirdly*, on the powerful influence of its example. As to the *first*, we must remember that man's heart has contracted from sin a triple concupiscence easy to be set on a flame; nay, more ready to catch fire than tinder from the approach of a burning coal. This is an inordinate love of whatever gratifies the senses of the body, a secret pride and ambition or itch of any present apparent glittering grandeur, and covetousness, or love of riches. Now, almost every thing in the world is to this inward *fontes peccati* or source of sin, what flame is to touch-wood, unless it be restrained and curbed. Yet its objects of vanity environ us on every side, in an infinite number, and assiduously besiege and lay snares to our hearts, as they never cease to strike our senses, and through them assault our hearts. It is an old proverb, that even drops often falling at length make furrows in the hardest stone, as we daily see. What effect then will not these objects have on our weak souls, if we consider on one side how continually they beat upon all our senses, and on the other, how naturally concupiscence is disposed to receive their impressions. The principles and seeds of virtue engrafted

engrafted in our souls, make, indeed, some resistance; but without an extraordinary watchfulness, courage and grace, these imperceptible seductions gain the affections, sow their seeds, insensibly extinguish those of virtue, and growing habitual, become a second nature. And this is the condition of the far greater part of those who live in the world, some in a greater some in a less degree.

The ordinary conversation of the world is malignant. For the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart; and the hearts of the men of the world are filled with its false maxims and spirit. Some philosophers tell us, that a toad is nothing but a compound of poison; for whereas other venomous insects carry their poison in one part, as in a hollow of the teeth, (which in such always hang loose) or in their tail or sting; the toad has nothing in it, neither skin, flesh, blood or other fluid, &c. which is not poisonous as long as it lives. So we may say the heart of the perfect worldling is a mere compound of the poison of the world. It has greedily received all its impressions almost without resisting any of them, unless by some other passion; thus its affections become all worldly, and it is made up as it were of almost nothing else but its spirit, its errors, and its passions, except some remains of the seeds of virtue not to be entirely blotted out. These principles of moral virtue still remaining, or at least good-breeding, a fear of losing his reputation, or courtesy will have sufficient power yet to restrain his tongue from open lewdness and impiety; but must not his whole conversation tend to convey into the hearts of others the images of those objects and passions of which his own is full? Even if he disguises them under the hypocrisy of some affected virtue, the heart will still betray itself; and if this danger be not perceived, the poison will only operate the more surely on even a virtuous hearer,

hearer, as he will be the less guarded against it. On which account *St. Teresa* gives it as an important advice, that no one chuse a director whose actions should seem to discover any tincture of vanity; because, even under the most elegant instructions of humility, that would occultry insinuate itself into the hearer, and the more deep as its dart would be the least suspected. How much more will this be true of a man quite devoured by several passions, how much soever he outwardly conceal them?

The influence of worldly discourse is the greater, as the heart, whatsoever words are used, has its own, and that the most moving language, by which it immediately speaks to the heart of the hearer. Dry words may please the ear, and gain applause on any subject, but will not reach the heart; whereas words spoke from the heart are sure to strike it home. Moreover a language from the heart, speaks not only by the tongue, but also by the accent, by the looks, by the actions and gesture, and by the whole man at once; and in like manner, it enters the hearer not only by the ears, but by all his senses together. How powerful must be its stroke upon his unguarded and open heart? If men of the world are not all so totally possessed by a worldly spirit (which God forbid) it must be still granted, that as they have more or less of it, so their conversation will be more or less contagious in communicating the poison of this spirit. May we not then say of the ordinary conversation of worldlings, what *Socrates* said of two vain women together, that they were mutually communicating each other's venom to one another.

May we not subscribe to the fathers, that the world is the school of the devil? Consequently to be always in its hurry, must be almost always to hear his interpreters, and organs, if not to speak one's self

self in his name. But men cry out, where is this general communication in the conversation of the world, if swearers, detractors, lewd and profane talkers be avoided? The danger and crime are not indeed so great when declared libertines are shunned as much as possible; but if we speak of men of the world, that is, imbued with its spirit, (from whom we must distinguish men in the world who are not of it); does not all their discourse and behaviour tend to imprint in others self-love, self-conceit, and the esteem, love and desires of pomp, riches and pleasures, and whatever the like objects they esteem, love and desire, and an hatred and contempt of holy mortification, humiliations, and whatever they hate and contemn. Is it possible, that such repeated lectures so strongly dictated and enforced, should not affect unguarded minds? They must insensibly be worked upon, and a passion for earthly goods must expel that christian coldness and indifference with which the true spirit of the gospel looks upon them as gifts of God which are a trust of a stewardship, as instruments of virtue and charity, and as dangerous snares. That discourse of the world, which seems indifferent, is at best unprofitable, and of great service to the devil, as it accustoms mens hearts to unprofitableness, sloth, curiosity and amusement.

The contagion of the world is most strengthened by the force of custom and example, which is incredible in all things, and here a torrent which violently bears down all before it, and is not to be resisted but by a firm virtue and strong grace. Even in virtue, the example of one single man will make more converts than eloquent sermons, as we read in *St. Charles Borromæo* and others. This is much more true of a general custom, such as here occurs in the world. Lessons by example are perpetual, they never cease, and are never interrupted.

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They are communicated in a more imperceptible insinuating way without the appearance of a precept or authority, and enter the heart by all the senses at once. We see the force of custom in the world in the most indifferent, and even in the most difficult and painful things, and which require the utmost constraint. A comparison of our dresses, carriage, manners and customs with those of *China* or *Japan*, or even of the Isle of *St. Kilda*, or countries still nearer us, and some under the same government, will furnish us most wonderful instances of this. And is not custom at home, even in things the most superfluous, and sometimes ridiculous too, a law which no one dares to contradict, and which makes things either highly valued or despised in turns, and is the cause of the strongest prejudices of whole nations. If any thing be but the fashion, this suffices for all. This influence of custom is much greater in what flatters the passions. Can we then wonder it is so powerful in the world, in which the lives of men are generally only the displaying of pride and the triumph of concupiscence, and their whole conduct proclaims the love, esteem and beatitude of what a christian is taught by faith to despise, hate and fear.

What can be the reason why the great truths of our holy religion make so small impression on christians? Such is their terrible importance, and such their undoubted certainty, that nothing is more wonderful than that men who believe them, should lead lives so little conformable to them? Alas! It is the torrent of example. They see others live in the spirit of the world; hence they soon forget the pious sentiments they had conceived in fervent meditation, and think they must live as others do. They even strain to its law the very precepts of the gospel, and behave as if salvation were easy and secure, because they see others do so. It is very

very difficult and extraordinary for any one to have the courage to single himself out in the fervent service of God, and break through the prejudice of the croud. Notwithstanding meditations and sermons, alarms of conscience and frequent calls of God, men still are carried with the stream.

God's mercy has provided us with all powerful antidotes against this contagion. If vanities assault our hearts through our senses, the visits of grace are no less frequent; these we must open our hearts to, and shut them to the others, hedging them round with the thorns of horror and dread against the n. Our senses are to be restrained and accustomed to denials, by frequent mortification, that they never seek greedily to be gratified. As to the company of the world, far be it from our hearts to judge any one in particular to be of a worldly spirit; but let us shun long or much conversation with those from whose words or carriage we fear danger to ourselves, seeing them only as much as charity and decency require; and during such company, raising our hearts often with fervour to God, to keep ourselves in spirit with him. Let such be our usual company, with which our hearts may be most improved and warmed in virtue. The less we can have of this, the more leisure we must reserve to converse and renew our spirit with God. In short, our grand preservatives are, mortification, prayer, meditation, good books. The oftener we are exposed to hear of vanity, the more diligently must we listen to God.

St. Francis of Sales weighed this with his ordinary holy discretion, when writing to a lady who had desired his advice for the education of two daughters, one designed for a nunnery, the other for the world, tells her, *b. 4. ep. 46* that the latter required much the greater care to be formed early to virtue, and by the practice of prayer and meditation to be

armed against its greater danger, and enabled to resist its example and false maxims. For a christian in the world must be like a rock, beaten on every side by the tempest, yet standing unmoved. *St. John the Baptist* was sanctified in his mother's womb, yet prepared himself by a most severe penitential life and long solitude, before he would appear in the world.

DISCOURSE XXV.

ON THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD.

1. **S**UCH are the motives which faith suggests, to inspire a christian with a contempt of the world, that one would think it ought to be easy and even natural to him to despise it. But the misfortune is, that few seriously consider them. To recapitulate some heads of them, the world and even its enjoyments are emptiness, vanity, and real evils and trouble. *St. Thomas of Villa Nova, Serm. in Luc. x.* compares men labouring in it, to madmen sweating and toiling to death, to push a great rock out of its place, which, if they could do, it would be nothing to the purpose, though for this they neglected the most important business. *Gerson, Serm. contra avar.* uses another comparison, saying, men who seek for happiness in the world, are like fools, who should with great pains seek for roses and tulips on nettles and briars, where they could only prick and perpetually wound themselves, instead of meeting the flower they sought.

2. The world is not only emptiness, but also all treachery and deceit. And it is now so worn out, and its cheats discovered by long experience, according to the observation of *St. Augustin, ep. 45.*

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ad Arment. that it ought long ago to have lost its painted false charms to deceive. Were but its falsehood and miseries truly understood, no one could want any other motives to be weary of it. O traitor world, thou promisest all good, and givest all evils; thou promisest life, and givest death; thou promisest joy, and givest sorrow; thou promisest rest, and behold trouble and disturbance. What advantages have all who ever adored thee, reaped from thee? Only present toil, anxiety and misery, and future torments. O! wert thou exposed in thy true colours! every one that beholds thee shall be startled, and shall fly back from thee. *Nah. iii. 7.*

3. The world is still more the object of the christian's horror, because the enemy of his soul, and of his God, loaden with his curses. He was obliged solemnly to abjure it, and renounce for ever all society with it, before he could be enrolled in God's service. It, on the other side, studies by all arts and stratagems, and frequently by open violence, to draw him from his allegiance to God, never ceasing in its attacks, by baits and false charms, by threats and terrors, and by false maxims and errors; *amoribus, terroribus, erroribus*, as *St. Augustin* says, *l. de corrept. & gr. c. 35.*

4. Though the world had really something worth our affections, and its goods were true and great, it would still be to be despised for God and his kingdom. It is the law of traffick to renounce less goods to acquire greater, as *St. Hilary* says, in *Psal. cxviii**.

Again; a soul is too noble to prostitute her affections on a base world. She is created for God, and capable of enjoying him. "He who is greater

* *Negotiatio est aliquid amittere ut majora lucreris.*

"than the world, can desire nothing of the world," says *St. Cyprian, ep. ad Donat.*

5. If we do not renounce the world, we renounce God; for they are things correlative.

Christ our Leader, our Captain, our King and our God, has taught us to despise and conquer the world, by his example and victory over it. "He who follows Christ, how can he so much as look on the vanities of the world, when he sees Christ has crucified them in his own flesh?" cries out *St. Ambrose, Serm. 5. in Ps. 118.* He has shewn us how contemptible all its goods are, by his contempt and privation of them. "*Carendo vilia fecit,*" says *St. Augustin, l. de vera relig. c. 16.* and to inspire us with confidence against it, he has already conquered it for us. *Confide: I have overcome the world,* says he. *John xvi. 14.*

But a soul which truly loves God, and has tasted the incomparable sweetness of his charms and love, wants no other motive to contemn and hate the world, as she finds it a country which is a stranger to her God, and in which men live in a forgetfulness of him. If she has been employed never so short a time in it, she is like a young fawn which has lost its dam; though it be tired and quite spent, it cannot rest, but runs still with all its strength till it find her. "So, says the devout *Suso, Dial. 6. p. 37.* do I fly again to thee, O living Fountain, fighting with a most ardent thirst. One little hour without thee, is a year. Nay, to have passed one day without thy commerce, would seem to a soul that loves thee, a thousand years." The world and its commerce must be all bitterness to such a heart.

7. Happy is he who is not of the world; but far more happy he who, moreover, hears no news of it, knows not what passes in it. It is sufficient for him to know there is a world to pray for, without any

any farther information about it, as the reformed *Cistercians at la Trappe*, who never hear how it goes on, only pray for it, without any communication with it, so much as by sending or receiving any letters. How charming is the elogium which the Roman martyrology gives our holy princess *St. Editha*, consecrated to God in a monastery as soon as born into the world, that she *rather never knew the world than forsook it*. She passed this life always an entire stranger to its vanities and crosses, and to its sins and dangers.

8. Happy are they also who, even later in age, and in a less degree, have fled from the commerce of the world, by renouncing it, and hiding themselves in monasteries and deserts, if they have perfectly forsaken it not only in body, but also in affection and desire, and really entertain or seek no other communication with it than to labour to sanctify it.

The true christian has his heart fixed only on God and on heavenly goods, remembering he is a stranger here. A traveller looks on all he sees on his road only as passing by, and with indifferency; he takes no part in shews, fairs or other things in his way, any further than to cast an eye upon them, and immediately leave them behind him. That passing glance does not make any impression on his heart; nor does he place his pleasure in them, because he seeks that only at home, his heart is on his journey's end; So the Christian remembers always *he has no permanent city here, but seeks that to come. Heb. xiii. 14.* His heart and his joy is there. He makes a moderate use of the lawful comforts which God allows us in this life, but only as passing, and without setting his mind upon them, considering, as *St. Augustin* says, *de civ. Dei, l. 22. c. 24.* that they are transient comforts of miseries, not objects of enjoyments.

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This contempt of the world is compatible with the most affluent temporal fortune or the highest worldly honours; though in them greater watchfulness and care is requisite to preserve the heart from being tainted by them. Hence the holy *Esther* says of her imperial crown, c. xiv. *Thou knowest my necessity, and that I detest in my heart the sign of my glory, which is upon my head.* And our countryman, the great *Alcuin*, Preceptor of the Emperor *Charlemagne*, writes thus to the Bishop of Lyons: "*Eli-*
pandus makes my riches and fortune a reproach,
 "and objects against me the number of my ser-
 "vants and vassals, which is 20,000, not knowing
 "that all depends on the heart. It is one thing to
 "possess the world, and another to be possessed
 "by the world. Some possess riches, but as free
 "and disengaged in their souls as if they possessed
 "them not. Others enjoy none, yet have them
 "in their hearts."

St. Bernard observes this degree of strangers and pilgrims on earth is the first in the contempt of the world, which so far is of precept to all. The second degree in this virtue is to be dead to the world. Of this the apostle says; *Col. iii. 3. For you are dead.* One that despises the world may yet be sensible to its losses and pleasures; but he that is dead to it is insensible under them. His heart is so absorbed in God and heaven, that he feels not successes or disappointments, applause or contempt in earthly affairs; so sovereignly does he undervalue them. All seem equal to him, so totally is he buried in his God, and so intent he is on him and the seeking only his most holy will. In these dispositions *St. Francis of Sales* cried out; *B. 4. ep. 13.* "I would not give one glance of the eye for
 "the whole world. I condemn it from the bot-
 "tom of my heart. I will have nothing but purely
 "for the greater honour and glory of God." And

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St. Basil thus describes the servant of God, *Admon. ad Filium Spirit.* " Burning with the love of God, " and always having heaven in view, he tramples " both on the pleasures and frowns of this world. " Perpetually going forward towards God, desiring " to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, all his " conversation is in heaven, and he converses amongst men rather as a painted figure." It is a vulgar but strong simile of our pious countryman, *Father Hilton*, that such a one finds no more pleasure in the delights of the world than in gnawing a dry stick.

The last degree in this virtue is to be crucified to the world. This expresses more than being dead to it; for it looks upon its honours, applause, riches and pleasures, with a loathing and horror. This was the sentiment of *St. Paul*, *Gal. vi. 14.* *By whom the world was crucified to me and I to the world.* Two things crucified to one another must be opposites, have their backs turned mutually to one another; or rather this means, they must be a torture and abhorrence to each other, as the cross is to one hanging upon it. Hence *St. Bernard* writes, *Serm. 7. in Quadr.* " I am dead to other " things—but those things which belong to Christ, " find me quick, alive and ready.—All the things " which the world loves are a cross to me; bodily " pleasure, honours, riches, vain praise. But what " the world looks upon as crosses, to these I am " fixed; to these I cleave close."

It is a precept to christians who live in the world, that they do not love it, or those things that are in it. *Be not conformed to this world. Rom. xii. 2.* But how is it possible to touch pitch, and not be defiled by it? to breathe a contagious air and not draw in its infection? to live in the midst of flames, and not burn? This is very possible, through God, who furnishes us arms and antidotes for our defence

fence and preservation, if we are careful to make use of them.

The first preservative is, that no young man enter the world, or engage in any state of life in it, till he has by prayer, meditation and pious reading, instructed himself in its more dangerous rencontres and snares, in its company, diversions, public places, &c. and diligently filled his mind with a dread of them, a firm resolution of shunning and being always armed against them, and with the holy sentiments of the gospel, opposite to the corruption that reigns in it. These truths must be so long and seriously pondered that they may have made deep and lasting impressions on the heart, which may make it impregnable to the maxims and example of the world. Penetrated with a great dread and idea of its dangers and evils, and armed with a steady resolution of being always firm and watchful against them, going into it, he must bear in mind the advice of *Jeremie* to the *Jews* going captives to *Babylon*; *Now you shall see in Babylon gods of gold and silver and wood and stone. Seeing the multitude before and behind adoring them, say in your hearts; Thee alone must we adore, O Lord. Bar. vi. 5.* Thus, meeting dangers, he must fervently renew in his heart his resolution and the remembrance of the fidelity which he owes to God against the world.

How contrary to this is the disposition in which most enter the world! They go into it without precaution, fear or apprehension. Blind, weak, and without experience as they are of its snares, they think themselves wise and strong enough to resist any evil, and want neither light to discover it, nor force to overcome it; nay, what is far more fatal, they go in the desire to court and call into themselves its flattering charms, and to indulge themselves in its delights to the edge of the precipice, as if able then to discern it, and stop the fall.

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They go with pleasure and inclination as into the country of their promised happiness and liberty; they go with hearts open, and even greedy to suck in its poison. Such are a willing and sure prey to it, as the only preservative against it is a true knowledge of its dangers, and a saving fear and distrust, which will always keep the heart timorous, watchful, and shut against them.

But the preparation alone cannot suffice. A general marching into an enemy's country not only provides him with the means to enter it safely, but also takes his measures how to secure himself thro' it, by shunning the more dangerous places, watching to discover all secret ambuscades, and preserving every where a communication for fresh supplies and daily provisions. Also, men going into a city infected with the plague, to secure themselves by a counter-poison, do not content themselves with taking it when they first go in, but daily and continually renew the use of it, to fortify their bodies afresh against the pestilential vapour. So in the world, meditation must be daily and continual, and always so much the more fervent and frequent as we oftener hear the voice of the devil, or handle his baits. We must never cease imploring the divine light and succours, by assiduous prayer, and nourishing in our hearts a just hatred and fear of the world, and a contempt of its grandeur, riches, pomp and pleasures, by considering their impiety, dangers and vanity; also, the life and spirit of Christ, and his opposition to, and maledictions upon the world. To once lose his idea of them, would be to certainly perish by them.

It will be a powerful help, if we often reflect what idea we shall have of things at the hour of death, and conceive the same at present. Ah! What will then be our sentiments? If we have ever seen a friend in the last moments, we might

observe that riches, reputation, honour or power, how fond soever he may have formerly been of them, then lost all their influence upon his heart, and appeared to him like dust in the balance, without weight, and without regard. Only what relates to eternity and virtue, seemed to him to deserve any real attention. Then things will appear to us in their true light, labours for virtue as nothing in comparison of the prize; the enjoyments of the world as nothing but smoke and emptiness. *Dom. Austin*, a pious monk at *la Trappe*, cried out at the point of death; "Now I understand how God's elect will be transported with joy at the judgment seat of Christ, when they shall clearly see by what nothings they were made eternally happy."

We must occupy our hearts much on God, and on spiritual things. If our thoughts are employed always on earth, our affections will become clogged with it. But if we fix the eye of our soul on heaven, we shall raise our affections thither, and forget, despise and hate this world. If a stranger goes into a dungeon, the gaoler burns in it frankincense or some berries of scent, to preserve him from the disagreeable smell of the place, and from the infection of the close air putrified by the prisoners breath, and carrying the contagion of the gaol-fever. So our hearts must burn with frequent aspirations to God to be preserved by his sweetness from the stench and contagion of the world.

Virtue is courteous to all, yet shuns too great dissipation by too great hurry and commerce with men. It studies indeed to be all to all, and to conform itself to the innocent dispositions and discourse of others, as the angel did who conducted young *Tobie* in a human shape, but like him it uses an invisible armour, raising its affections frequently to God amidst its worldly conversation and employs. And, though humane and obliging to every one, it shuns

shuns with all possible care, the company of those whose discourse or behaviour is notoriously vicious and worldly; for by such, even a faint would imperceptibly imbibe the maxims and spirit of the world.

Patience and joy under tribulations, and voluntary mortifications, are a great means to draw our hearts from the world. "When mothers would wean their children, says *St. Augustin, Sermon. 311. t. 5. p. 1255.* they anoint their breasts with aloes, that the babe, offended by the bitterness, may seek the breasts no more. God, in his mercy towards you, has, for this purpose, filled the world with bitterneffes; yet you love it still." His sweet providence sows all our roads with thorns, and surrounds us with disgraces and crosses, all to wean us from a dangerous criminal world. We must then joyfully make this use of them.

If we are careful by these means, to arm ourselves against the charms of the world, God will conduct us safe through its waves, as he did the *Hebrews* through the *Red Sea*, without so much as their clothes being wet; he will preserve us in the almost universal deluge, as he did *Noe* in the general flood; he will protect us untouched in the midst of flames, as he did the three children in the furnace.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

ON MORTIFICATION.

AS the mystery of the cross was a scandal and a folly to the Jews and Gentiles, so is now the practice of it, even to many christians. They acknowledge it the instrument of salvation and the only road to bliss, yet in the practice of their lives are no less openly its adversaries than the Pagans, as they are no less eager in seeking their own ease and satisfaction, and denying no delight to their senses, which they can crave. Every one seems to look upon himself as born only to enjoy ease and pleasure. Old and young, rich and poor, nobles and labourers run after this ever delusive charm, according to their inclinations, and think this their portion, and that all suffering is an injustice to them. If they refrain from unlawful pleasures, they imagine they do their duty to God. But religion gives us very different ideas; *The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.* Mat. xi. 12.

In that happy state of innocence in which man was created, God was his centre, and his soul with all her powers was carried to love him in all things, and this with pleasure and ease. *God made man upright.* Eccl. viii. 30. The senses conveyed no allurements to unlawful pleasures or excesses; and the inferior or sensitive part of the soul received no impressions but what were conformable to the superior or to reason, which it obeyed, and to which it was always subject; nor had man within himself any concupiscence, or any irregular appetite able
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to excite any disorderly motion or temptation; the rule of rectitude alone engaged and commanded all his powers and senses; but the soul having revolted against God by sinning, her sensitive appetite rebelled against her own reason, and often, even against her will, excites such motions or affections as she herself condemns. *The evil which I will not, that I do. Rom. viii. 19.* Thus, in a just punishment of his disobedience to his Creator, man finds his body, and the sensitive appetite in his soul, rebellious against his own reason; both putting obstacles to his good desires, and also stirring up in him irregular ones. Thus *the flesh lusts against the spirit. Gal. v. 17.* This rebellion of his own faculties creates in him a continual intestine war, which God permits for our perpetual humiliation and for our trial, as he left the *Jebusites* amidst the *Jews* for their exercise.

This jarring and repugnance of our passions with reason, and this propension of our depraved nature to evil lay us under a necessity of the constant practice of mortification to subdue them, and keep them within the bounds of submission and obedience. By it, pride is to be overcome, self-love and inordinate affection to creatures rooted out, and all our passions restrained. If ever the curb is removed, they break loose and become ungovernable. To think of gratifying them constantly in what may seem in itself not criminal, and still to hope to have them under command in the time of violent temptations, is to pretend not to have sinned in *Adam*, not to have contracted this universal contagion of mankind, to be privileged against our spiritual enemies, and exempt from the common law of God's providence in the promises of his graces and of his glory; for he has annexed them to this means. It is only by our fidelity in the practice of it, that we can obtain his strength and
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be crowned by him with victory. We may prolong our prayers, frequent the sacraments, and multiply good works, it is all in vain if we join not mortification. Our passions are tygers, which always grow fiercer by being soothed. Who ever caresses and fortifies an enemy against himself? It is a man's study always to weaken and reduce him. This is, above all, true of our spiritual enemies, and chiefly our domestic ones. We are, of ourselves, too weak for them, and have no other means to procure the protection of God.

Experience shews how furious concupiscence becomes by being flattered, even in little things. Passions might be easily curbed in children; but their first little inclinations to pride, vanity, anger, sloth, love of pleasure, &c. by being indulged, grow stronger and stronger, and form tyrannical habits, which often govern men in all their thoughts and actions. Their senses, as it were, of their own accord, eagerly catch after all objects that are agreeable to them, whether vicious or innocent. The will also seeks to please itself in all things, and all a man's powers become to him continual and violent tempters to evil. Concupiscence heightens acts in them almost irresistibly, as it acts with quickness, and with impetuosity. With quickness; for as it is in some measure the operation of nature itself, so this state of corruption, and of nature fortified by habit, seizes its object, or excites its inclination, without deliberation, as fire, which acts naturally, burns in the very instant it falls on matter disposed. Thus it often waits not for the command of the slow will, nor the process of a deliberation; by its promptitude, it prevents both the understanding and the will, and gathers the first fruits, or to speak more properly, sows the first seed of the disorderly affection, before it appears. Though this motion, when entirely indeliberate

berate and invincible, is not sinful, it is still a great misery; it may also be sinful in its cause, which may be wilful in unmortified souls. We must add, the will and reason being prevented by the sensitive part are in great danger of being drawn into a partnership, and a soul made guilty by some degree of consent. For the will to be victorious, it must snatch the act back out of the hands of the enemy, as of a thief who has already seized it. Now mortification prevents at least such inordinate motions being frequent and violent. It keeps this enemy in subjection and obedience; if it makes any sallies of this nature, the will, by habitual mortification, easily, and as it were naturally, is ready to suppress them. It is perpetually watching over itself against such motions, and is always ready armed against them, and will not easily take any part in them.

Secondly, Concupiscence is also strong and violent, often obstinate in its assaults, and, unless weakened by mortification, becomes morally irresistible. God has, indeed, subjected it to the command of free-will; *its appetite shall be under thee*, Gen. iv. 7. but he has made mortification the condition of this command; this power he owes to his strength in this war, and it is the means to which God has promised his graces. He has established it to be our spiritual arms both offensive and defensive.

If we add, that concupiscence never ceases laying snares and making assaults upon us, we shall see the necessity of continual mortification to be still greater. Were it confined to certain actions, times, or places, our vigilance might allow us some moments of respite; but as it never interrupts its efforts, and is always weighing us down, we must never be wearied in always labouring to subdue it, and nothing less than an indefatigable courage in
morti-

mortification can resist it. Alas! Without this, it infects all our actions, even our virtues. Every thing in us will be corrupted; not one fibre in our hearts, not one affection will remain pure; its contagion will be universal over all our faculties, and spread itself in a greater or less degree through all our actions and thoughts, and acquiring daily new strength, it will grow continually more triumphant in us.

Men say, our senses and inclinations may be gratified in pleasures which are lawful and moderate. It is true that we may use, in temperance, some lawful comforts of this life, without passion or inordinate attachment to them. But if we do this with eagerness or too often, it will be both criminal and pernicious. ~~If~~ we accustom our will or senses to please themselves, so as very rarely to contradict them, they will be insatiable, and will always burn with an itching after whatever is agreeable to them, and after unlawful satisfactions too, and it will be no more in our power to command them, or stop our desires within the just bounds of virtue and temperance, than to raise a dyke to hem the swelling waves of the sea. *If thou givest to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies.* Eccl. xviii. 31. On passions v. Bernez. t. 1 13. 165. " Mortification, by procuring us the command over passions, purchases us the sweetest " peace and the greatest enjoyment of life. Their " reign in us fills us with an insatiable, cruel, tormenting thirst, gnaws and tears us inwardly without ceasing, and makes our hearts the most " frightful scene of disorder and confusion. Men " in such a state groan under the most insupportable " slavery and its heavy load, without being sensible " of it. Could we see such a heart naked, we " should pity and abhor it. Such is the state of a " soul, a prey to her passions. God could not " create

“ create man to be so miserable. No, he reduces
“ himself to such a condition. God leaving him
“ subject to passions, since the disorder he has
“ brought upon himself by sin, has instituted and
“ taught him a means not to be hurt by them, but
“ to make them the matter of his triumph. This
“ is mortification. If the remedy seems bitter,
“ we must remember the violence and miseries of
“ our diseases, and we shall think it pleasant and
“ easy. Physicians lay open the dangers and ob-
“ stinacy of a distemper to magnify their cure, and
“ to recommend the strength of their medicines.
“ If we consider the frightful disorders of the pas-
“ sions, and sound the depth of those spiritual ma-
“ ladies, we shall embrace the cure with joy, and
“ extol the incomparable sweetness of its effects.
“ Ah! he who has indulged his flesh and his incli-
“ nations, is not able to brook the inevitable se-
“ verities, contradictions and disappointments
“ which all must meet in this life. What furies does
“ he feel in his breast under them? What trouble,
“ rage and disturbance? If we see a child hu-
“ moured and pampered in all things from the cra-
“ dle, we may cry out; What affliction and bitter-
“ ness do his good parents prepare one day for
“ themselves! What miseries to their spoilt fa-
“ vourite! The time will come when he will repay
“ their indulgence with its proper fruits, and when
“ he shall suffer in himself their dire effects. On
“ the contrary, one who from his cradle has been
“ taught to refuse many things to his senses and in-
“ clinations, and to curb his desires, enjoys a calm
“ and peace which is unalterable, and by the ami-
“ able sweetness of his happy temper, easily tri-
“ umphing over all passions, charms all others by
“ his virtue, and the marks thereof, which shine in
“ his very countenance, but the happiness of which
“ he tastes in his own breast. O sweet fruit, an

" happy recompence of holy mortification. Sin
 " created disorder in man's soul and body, and
 " subjects it to a revolt, and a perpetual war with-
 " in itself; mortification removes that jarring,
 " takes away in great measure that disorder, and
 " restores in part the due subordination which man
 " possessed in himself in original justice, and it is
 " part of the happiness of that state. As we cure
 " the body by purging its superfluous and noxious
 " humours, so we heal the soul by cutting off its
 " evil appetites and desires, as *Plato says in Gorgia.*"

If continual mortification be essentially necessary as a preservative against sin, it is no less so as the means requisite to repair past sins. We are sinners, and bound to do penance. Now this requires works of mortification, which must be the fire by which we sacrifice our members to God, repair the injuries we have committed against God by them, and make them to serve justice. *As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity to iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification. Rom. vi. 19.* As our life is to be a continual penance, so must it be a perpetual martyrdom of mortification. Also daily sins require daily remedies. The just, even the most perfect have always fresh occasions of penance, as they have always superfluous affections to retrench and cut off.

To be ingrafted in Christ, and made his members, we must bear his image, which is to be framed by mortification in our soul; by it, the love of the world and the image of the old *Adam* is to be effaced; it is the pencil which must form the new man in us. By its daily operation, we must every day be enabled to say more and more perfectly; *I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me. Gal. ii. 20.* To be
 always

always crucified, always a dying to ourselves, is the great work by which this change must be continually more and more perfected; it is that to which we have bound ourselves in baptism, in which we engaged ourselves to this daily death to the old man, to imitate the death of Christ. *All we who were baptized in Christ, were baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death. Rom. vi. 3, 4.*

By the continual exercise of mortification, we must likewise bear a resemblance with Christ, who though he stood not in need of mortification for himself, or to subdue any passions, which, in him, with all his senses and powers, were most perfectly obedient to reason and grace, yet to purchase this remedy for us and give us an example, he was pleased to lead the most mortified, laborious and painful life on earth. *Christ did not please himself, Rom. xv. 3.* though his will was ever holy. And as to exterior mortification of the body, he chose to be born in the coldest season of the year, and to be subjected to its severities, and to all corporal wants, laid in a manger, in an open stable, deprived even of those comforts which are not denied to the most miserable. Only eight days old he would undergo the painful ceremony of circumcision, and begin so soon to spill his blood. He must have suffered much in his flight into *Egypt*, and in his seven years exile, in the most extreme poverty amidst strangers. His hidden life during thirty years was laborious at his trade under his parents. When he left this state, he entered into a wilderness; and there, without any house to cover him from the weather and be a retreat, he spent forty days in a rigorous fast, without taking any nourishment, employing the power of his divinity to preserve his life under that severity, but not to abate the suffering of it, or the pain of hunger. If his public

life appeared less austere than that of *St. John Baptist*, it was composed of self-denials, mortification, and sufferings in laborious journeys, fatigues, sweats, poverty, reproaches, and wants of necessities; for he lived on alms, and not having a place to lay his head on. And in what sufferings and humiliations did not he close his mortal life? All for our example. *Think diligently upon him that endured such opposition against himself from sinners, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds: for you have not yet resisted unto blood. Heb. xii. 3, 4. He is the way, the truth and the life. John xiv. 6.*

Mortification not only expels and overcomes vice, but obtains also the most special heavenly gifts of God, who crowns with them the victory over the passions. He is always ready to bestow them upon us, but the obstacles of our irregular affections and passions stop his liberal hand. Spiritual and carnal affections are opposite to one another, and can never be joined together. The flesh is nourished with visible things, and delights in corruption; the spirit only with spiritual and incorruptible objects. Whence the apostle says, that *flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God. 1 Cor. xv. 15.* No man sows seed on ground over-run with thorns and weeds, but he first rids and purges it. Neither does God bestow his heavenly seeds on an unmortified heart, filled with earthly affections, which would choke it. Mortification must first dispose the soul. It dispels the darkness which clouds the understanding, by cutting off impure and superfluous affections and desires. Thus it procures heavenly light in the understanding, which instructs and directs, teaching, in an affective and clear manner, the evils of sin and the paths of virtue, not in bare words, which only sound in the ear, or speculatively fill the mind.

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In like manner, it purifies the will from the clogs of earthly affections, and obtains for it the heavenly fire of spiritual affections and divine love. That high mountain cannot be approached, nor even seen by heavy souls drowned in the flesh; mortification strips them of it, and gives the will wings to mount to God, as it purifies the eyes of the understanding to contemplate him.

Nor is there any virtue which can be acquired, even in the lowest degree, without the help of mortification, which must prune away the opposite vicious affections which spring from concupiscence, and which fight against every virtue. As the superfluous branches must be pruned off the vine, or it can produce no good grapes; so neither can our souls bring forth the good fruits of virtue, unless pruned and cultivated with much greater care. It would be easy to shew this by an induction of every particular virtue. *Man knows not its price; nor is it found in the land of those that live daintily. Job xxviii. 13.*

Again; Every virtue requires heroic acts which cannot be exercised without mortification to corrupt nature. We cannot be humble, chaste, patient, meek, &c. but by mortification, which is the general means of all virtue, both to perform courageously its most difficult acts, and to remove its obstacles. The garments of the old *Adam* are not to be thrown off without violence, nor the acts of the new to be practised often, without difficulty.

Mortification is particularly necessary to obtain the great gift of prayer. To contemplate or pray with attention, and pure inflamed affections, the great condition is purity of heart, free from earthly desires and affections. These are dust which cloud the spiritual eyes of the soul, and defile the bed of the heart.

God's delight is to communicate himself to men, and to fill their hearts; but he is a jealous spouse, and

and cannot enlighten an understanding, or place his delights in a heart which are not totally his. The disturbance of passions, and the filth and stench of disorderly affections, indispose a soul for his conversation. It was the saying of the admirable Abbot *Nile*; "Whatever you bear patiently, you will find the fruit of it in prayer." *St. Ignatius* of *Loyola* hearing a person called a man of great contemplation, corrected the word thus; "Say rather, a man of great mortification;" expressing the root or source of his rare gift of prayer. Mortification and prayer are the two great means of christian perfection, which is begun, increased and completed by them, and they mutually assist each other. Mortification disposes to prayer, and this again perfects the mortification, especially of the interior powers. Its business is to beg they be more and more purified.

Mortification, accompanied with prayer, is the great means of christian perfection. The unmortified may multiply prayers, alms, and all other good works, they lose the greatest part of the merit of these virtues, through the mixture of self-love and passions, and will always be at a great distance from even the sight of perfect virtue or pure love of God. They can never say to God entirely and without reserve, with the prophet; *I am your's. Ps. cxviii. 94.* This is an easy word, and very common, *Facilis vox & communis videtur*, as *St. Ambrose* says in *Ps. cxviii. Serm. 12. n. 37.* Men may easily persuade themselves that they borrow these words of the saint sincerely, but how few understand them? few penetrate their sense or extent; few repeat them truly. *Facilis vox, sed paucorum, ib.* Only those who are universally mortified to themselves and to all creatures; who love only God, and seek no other inheritance or portion in their hearts but him alone.

God

God bestows all his special graces and gifts only on the mortified. If a king should desire to favour, or even adopt the son of some slave, he would first require that the youth should free himself from all his rustic manners and dispositions, and change his dress, then begin to appear at court. So God requires the soul to be rid of her carnal affections. Indeed they are opposite to his grace, nor can they be called together; they delight only in what is visible and corruptible, as the senses themselves are; but God's spirit cleaves only to what is invisible, spiritual and eternal. It then is not to be communicated to a soul, not disposed by mortification, to receive it. And the more mortified a soul is, in the same degree does she advance in spiritual light, divine love and other gifts.

Mortification is a voluntary, painful affliction or self-denial for virtue. That which is found in resisting vice, is of precept; as is so much of the free acts of this virtue as is necessary to satisfy for sin, to subdue the passions, and to enable us to comply with all our duties. For these ends there is a strict obligation of exercising frequent acts both of interior and exterior mortification, over and above those particular acts, which obedience to the church or superiors, or the particular circumstances in which we live, enjoin us. This is a precept of the law of nature, and of the gospel or positive law of God. It has pleased almighty God not to determine clearly the bounds which are of precept, in regard to each particular matter, and this that no one might dare to fix to himself any in the practice of virtue, which every one is bound to make the exercise of his whole life, and not to imagine his martyrdom finished but with his last breath. The most perfect, and those who have acquired the greatest mastery over themselves, would soon lose it, were they to let go the reins. Our passions can
be

be subdued, but never extirpated; they always live within us, like fire hid under the ashes, which blazes out again, if set free. Weeds in a garden, or superfluous branches in the vine, grow again, unless they are always kept low.

Mortification is two-fold; one called *exterior*, which is occupied in subduing the body, the tongue and the senses; the other is called *interior*, which bridles the will and governs the affections, thoughts and imagination. For man consists of these two parts, and has a conflict to sustain in each, a resistance from each in the practice of virtue and extirpation of vice. Concupiscence resides in the inordinate tendency of the soul to evil; but the senses are the windows through which it is inflamed, and the body is its chief incentive. Both therefore are to be restrained by the constant practice of this double mortification; and, according to the measure of our progress herein, chiefly in the interior mortification and humility, we shall advance in the love of God. It will reign in us in proportion as we shall die to ourselves and creatures. The diminution of concupiscence is the increase of charity; perfect charity is no concupiscence; *St. Augustin, l. 83. qu. 31.* If a man should, with great labour, have amassed a great apparent heap of virtue, without dying to himself, it would only be an empty shew and outside, concealing a fund of secret self-love.

If we desire that concupiscence should not burn and consume us, mortification must extinguish its flames. If we would extirpate sin in our hearts, and subdue our passions, mortification must destroy the one and tame the other. If we pray to be enlightened and inflamed, and enriched from above to know and love good and spiritual things, it is by mortification we must be prepared for such gifts. "Souls without it, says *St. Basil, or. 21.* are like

“ to heavy birds, which have indeed wings, but
 “ are too bulky to rise from the earth with them.
 As mortification must begin a spiritual life, so a
 progress in it must be its advancement and perfec-
 tion. Whence Christ says of his Father; *Every*
branch which brings not forth fruit, he purges, that it
may bring more fruit. John xv. 2. He cuts off sinners;
 but purifies more by pruning those who by mortifi-
 cation bring fruit. “ For if they were not clean
 “ (by mortification) they could not bring fruit; and
 “ if they were not cleansed and purged more and
 “ more, they could not bring more fruit. Where-
 “ fore he purges more and more those that are
 “ clean and fruitful, that they may produce more
 “ fruit as they become more purged. But those
 “ which are not purged, become barren,” says St.
Austin, Tr. 80. in Joan.

Though interior mortification be the more noble
 and the more essential, this cannot subsist without
 the exterior, and it would be an error in faith to
 deny the necessity and obligation of the latter.
 And as its acts consist in actions which are exterior
 and sensible, the occasions of exercising them are
 most palpable, consequently more easily seized;
 which is an advantage it possesses above that which
 is interior and spiritual, the acts of which are to be
 facilitated by it. It would be a false pride and
 presumption for any one to pretend to true interior
 mortification, without the assistance of exterior.

The latter is also necessary in itself; our body
 having been the instrument of sin must be the vic-
 tim of repentance, and be punished by mortifi-
 cation. *Secondly*, As Christ suffered in his body, so
 are we to suffer in our criminal ones, crucifying our
 flesh, that we may live by his spirit, and *fill up those*
things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in
our flesh, Col. ii. 4. *Mind the things that are above,*
not the things that are upon the earth; for you are dead.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. Col. iii. 2, 3, 5. Thirdly, Every mortification is an agreeable sacrifice to God, and a seed of an immense glory to come, means to procure our souls inward strength and grace. Though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. This is what the apostle conjures us to do by the most endearing motive of God's mercy, his darling attribute. I beseech you by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service. Rom. xii. 1.

Fourthly, Intemperance is to be restrained. All its pernicious consequences are so many motives for our mortification. When the Israelites had impatiently desired flesh and been fed with quails in the wilderness, whilst the meat was yet in their mouths, the Lord struck them, and the place was called the sepulchres of concupiscence. Num. xi. 33, 34. Whence the wise man prays; Lord, take from me concupiscence of the belly, and let not concupiscence of lust seize me, and deliver me not to an unbridled and undisciplined soul. Eccl. xxiii. 6. These evils mortification only can deliver me from. It alone can allay the heat of those passions, preserve us from their furious assaults, or make us victorious under them. Fifthly, It prepares the soul to receive grace and heavenly wisdom, which is not found in the land of those who live daintily. Job. xxviii. 13.

Lastly, The flesh is our enemy, and opposes us in the service of God, if it be pampered and treated delicately. It is an adversary, the most implacable, the most inveterate, and the most dangerous. It every where follows us, nor can we fly from it.
Morti-

Mortification is the arms God has given us against it. If we neglect it, and cherish this treacherous serpent, we are sure to fall by it. *He who nourishes his servant delicately from his childhood, shall afterwards find him stubborn.* Prov. xxix. 21. The body was given us to be the slave of the soul, and to obey reason and God in all things. It proudly rebels against both, would be master, and enslave my spiritual and immortal soul. Shall I tamely submit it to such a tyranny? *I am too great, and born to too great things, to be the slave of my body,* as the heathen philosopher could say, Seneca, ep. 65. *A wise man is not the lover, but the steward of his body, as of a necessary burthen.* id. ep. 92.

END OF VOLUME THE FIRST.



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